

## Call for Interim Director for a Faculty Teaching and Learning Center

The SUNY Old Westbury administration is seeking to (re)-establish a teaching and learning center. It is hoped that a full-time director will be hired through a national search. The administration indicated this is not a possibility at the moment – due to budgetary constraints - and has asked for an Interim Director to be selected (or taken) from the faculty. The Interim Director would have a reduced teaching load.

The responsibilities of the Director include:

- securing grant-based funding,
- developing a long-term proposal for the teaching and learning center, that shows how it will have a significant impact on the whole faculty and substantial influence on student learning.
- overseeing the center's budget,
- coordinating with faculty departments and the college's offices
- facilitating consistent programming,
- providing support for faculty members in their teaching
- developing and maintaining a website for the center

The position would also involve working with other institutions and organizations to stay informed about the latest developments in teaching and learning and sharing this information with OW faculty.

There are concerns about taking a faculty member away from a department and from students. Some departments are struggling to fill vacated faculty lines. Will the faculty director have the required resources and skill set, as most faculty are not trained for the broad set of skills required? Will the faculty member have the time to do all the tasks expected of the new position? Will the director be expected to be on campus 4-5 days a week for 12 months? Additional concerns were that such a center, while nice to have, may not provide value relative to its cost.

## Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning

### Vision/Wishlist/Recommendations

## Background

The Provost seeks to establish a Teaching and Learning Center at Old Westbury, and has asked that the process be driven by faculty input. This document is a vision statement that collects recommendations, wish lists, etc., that we as faculty want from a Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. This document is a **work in progress** that provides a starting point for discussions, and is not a final or definitive plan of such a center.

The recent book **Centers for Teaching and Learning : The New Landscape in Higher Education (2023)** by Mary C. Wright is solely about TLCs and provides significant guidance. TLRC requested that our library purchase an ebook version, and it is available to the OW community through the following link

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oldwestbury-ebooks/detail.action?docID=30395426>

## Name options

Teaching and Learning Center

Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning

Faculty Center for Teaching, Learning, and Professional Development

## Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the current Teaching and Learning Resources Committee (TLRC) defined in the Faculty Bylaws and copied below serve as a good starting point for the aims of the proposed Teaching and Learning Center:

- (1) Assist faculty with problems arising from their teaching.*
- (2) Organize workshops focusing on faculty growth, acquisition of knowledge, skills, sensitivities and techniques related to teaching and learning.*
- (3) Promote interdisciplinary exchanges to help understand modes of teaching in one field with possible applications in another.*
- (4) Improve student learning, preparation of learning materials, redesigning courses and systematic instruction.*
- (5) Create an effective environment for teaching and learning.*
- (6) Provide a forum for faculty to discuss and exchange ideas on research.*

*(7) Communicate teaching methods, innovative pedagogical practice, and relevant issues to the College as a whole.*

***b) Library:***

*(1) Provide advice and counsel to the Library Director with respect to the following:*

- (a) general policy on budget priorities for academic services,*
- (b) encouraging liaison with Departments, and*
- (c) informing the Faculty and students about developments in the Library.*

*(2) Communicate the needs and views of the Faculty and students to the Director of the Library.*

***c) Instructional (Academic) technologies:***

*(1) Facilitate faculty understanding and utilization of informational technologies.*

*(2) Provide a forum for discussion and dissemination of information useful to faculty related to instructional and informational technologies.*

*(3) Participate in the prioritizing and resource allocation for faculty informational and instructional technology needs, such as providing input to any Budget Planning committees and the Chief Information Officer (CIO) regarding allocation of SCAP funds.*

Additionally, the teaching and learning center should:

- Facilitate workshops on best practices
- Develop and maintain an online and offline repository of resources and guidance related to teaching and learning
- Respond to faculty requests for professional development on topics of interest related to teaching and learning by providing training, inviting outside experts, etc.
- Survey faculty to find out their teaching related needs, interests, etc.
- Communicate with directors of the learning support services (e.g., writing center, tutoring center) and facilitate communication and coordination between student needs and faculty teaching

SUNY Oneonta – a TLC with broader professional development activities

Provost Dorothy Escribano brought to our attention the Faculty Center for Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship at SUNY Oneonta. Its master plan (<https://suny.oneonta.edu/faculty-center/master-plan>) is far more ambitious than just teaching and learning. For instance, it has goals to foster faculty professional development, such as mentoring mid-career faculty, guidebook for chairs, luncheons seminars where faculty speak about their research. These seem to be similar to some of the aims of the now-discontinued Faculty Experience: Community and Equity Presidential Committee. Therefore, a broader “faculty center” is something to keep on the table for discussion (and has been requested by faculty in the past). Chapter 4 of Wright describes such TLCs as promoting ‘holistic professional learning’, and throughout the chapter refers to them as ‘HPL-infused CTL’.

## Organizational Structure

The center should be under the purview of the Office of Academic Affairs. It should have a full-time (12-month) Director, reporting to the Provost. It may have additional support staff and may include instructional designers.

There should be an advisory board consisting of administrators and faculty, perhaps appointed in collaboration with the Faculty Senate Chair. It seems natural to have the faculty members elected to TLRC serve as the faculty positions on the advisory board.

Chapter 4 of the book by Wright is devoted to the organizational structure of CTLs, and some excerpts will be included below.

### Director

The Director position should be a full-time professional staff or administrative role. The director should have extensive experience in teaching and in technology. Ideally, they have a terminal degree and at least a minimal publication record indicating scholarly activity. While the director can come from faculty, **splitting the role with a faculty position, e.g., a tenured or tenure-track faculty member with a reduced teaching load, is not recommended.** (Most faculty fill specific departmental niches and have specialized areas of expertise, and typically do not possess the broad array of skills and knowledge required for this position. Additionally, the role would impinge on their teaching, service, and research responsibilities.) The director ideally would have successful grant writing experience related to teaching and learning as the Center would benefit from grant support. Experience with institutional research and assessment would be a plus. A national search for the position is recommended.

The Director should provide an annual report to the Provost and to the Faculty Senate (or TLRC) on the successes of the past academic year and plans for the upcoming academic year. Performance review would be conducted by the Provost’s Office.

On p. 160 of Wright is CTL leadership. It notes the large number of skills an effective CTL director should have:

*budgeting, understanding of institutional politics, hiring and mentoring staff, program evaluation, maintaining visibility, networking, strategic planning, relationship management, internal and external mentorship, knowledge of theories relating to higher education, and expertise as an effective change agent.*

Wright next cites a 2017 study by that found that “educational development in the US is positioned as an administrative, not an academic, function”, but on the other hand, the authors of the study argued “faculty status for educational developers is necessary to bridge the faculty-administrative divide and position them to be effective change agents” (Wright, p. 160). Wright finds that “52% of TLC centers appear to be led by individuals with faculty status” (p.161), and that “CTL staff size does have a significant negative relationship with the presence of a leader with faculty status’. In addition, Wright found that “the vast majority of CTL leaders hold some sort of directorship” that is, administrative title (p.163).

## Location

The Library is the canonical/default choice. It has existing resources (e.g. books, periodicals, office space), and provides a physical hub with student services such as the writing and math learning centers and instructional technology.

The New Academic Building is where most classes are taught and most faculty have offices. Having a center for teaching and learning in the NAB, or signage about a new TLC in the library, if only temporarily for the first year, may provide more visibility.

## Events

The center should host events that bring in outside speakers.

The center should run a mentoring program for new faculty, and/or faculty that want to improve their teaching.

The center should compensate faculty for extra service (such as mentoring) it asks them to do.

### Repository of resources

The center should create, develop, purchase, and maintain resources – both online and offline – for teaching and learning, particularly on topics of faculty interest. For instance, other teaching and learning centers have created and developed extensive materials involving guidance related to teaching with AI.

The current online repository for TLRC/CETL at Old Westbury is inadequate. The new teaching and learning center should create and maintain an active and informative online presence.

The TLC webpages for SUNY Oneonta, Geneseo, Brockport seem more complete and actively updated, and could serve as models:

<https://facultycenter.openlab.oneonta.edu/>

<https://www.geneseo.edu/tlc>

<https://www2.brockport.edu/academics/celt/>

### Funding/Budget

TLRC inquired about the available budget, but the guidance we received from administration was to focus on the vision. Thus, we leave the matter to the administration. However, we recommend that the director be asked to write grants and seek funding from outside sources, as we know resources at OW are often limited and uncertain.

For some background information, here is some data provided by Antonia Di Gregorio provided on TLRC Director Salaries at some other SUNY comprehensive colleges:

Each individual school had "director" in its title.

Suny Fredonia and in 2021 had a reported pay of \$87,065 (Associate Librarian / tenured)

Suny Geneseo and in 2021 had a reported pay of \$84,288

Suny Oneonta and in 2021 had a reported pay of \$73,594

Suny Oswego and in 2021 had a reported pay of \$122,674 (Professor / tenured)

Suny Plattsburgh and in 2021 had a reported pay of \$79,813 (Professor / tenured)

## References (partial list)

### **Centers for Teaching and Learning : The New Landscape in Higher Education (2023)**

**by Mary C. Wright**

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oldwestbury-ebooks/detail.action?docID=30395426>

<https://podnetwork.org/centers-programs/>

<https://podnetwork.org/resources/center-for-teaching-and-learning-matrix/>

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty-issues/teaching/2023/09/13/new-book-explores-rise-teaching-and-learning-centers>

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/americans-value-good-teaching-do-colleges?cid=at&sra=true>