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## Reported Long-Term Value and Effects of Teaching Center Consultations

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*We regularly ask clients for feedback on their recent consultations with Center for Instructional Development and Research (CIDR) staff, but in the past we have not systematically assessed our longer-term contributions to the teaching of our clients. We recently surveyed faculty and teaching assistants who consulted with CIDR one to five years ago and found that many former clients highly valued CIDR's contribution to the development of their teaching. However, some of the most highly valued benefits they identified were not limited to what they did each day in class. This chapter identifies benefits of consulting with a teaching center that clients reported valuing one to five years after the consultation.*

Since the emergence of teaching and learning centers in the latter half of the twentieth century, scholars increasingly have emphasized the importance of self-assessment as an essential component of faculty development programs (Centra, 1976; Frantz, Beebe, Horvath, Canales, & Swee, 2005; Plank, Kalish, Rohdieck, & Harper, 2005;

Sorcinelli, 2002). Purposes include both summative (such as documenting achievement and justifying the use of resources) and formative (such as improving services and setting examples that can promote institutional accountability). Sorcinelli (2002) suggests that faculty developers can use program assessment not only to demonstrate “that we do what we say we do” (p. 16) but also to satisfy demands for accountability to administrators.

In an effort to understand more about the assessment of faculty development programs, Chism and Szabó (1997–1998) conducted a survey with a sample of two hundred institutions in the United States and Canada. They concluded that faculty developers have begun to heed calls to assess their own services, particularly with the use of participation numbers and satisfaction surveys to assess the success of faculty development events. The researchers noted, though, that fewer than 20 percent of their respondents always or usually evaluated the impact of their services on users’ teaching.

Brinko and Menges (1997) note that instructional consultants in centers rarely seek to assess the impact of their consultations. Certainly, there are those who assess consultation services, usually through measures of satisfaction obtained immediately upon completion of the consultation process (Fink & Bauer, 2001) or through occasional assessment of the use of consultations (for example, Wilson, 1986). However, any long-term effects of consultations are rarely assessed.

This chapter describes our attempt to begin addressing this challenge of identifying the long-term effects of our teaching center’s consultation services. We designed a client survey that attempts to go beyond user satisfaction by asking former clients to report the value and ongoing effects of their consultations with our staff. We begin with a brief overview of the work of the Center for Instructional Development and Research (CIDR), followed by a description of the survey and a discussion of responses we received from former clients.

## **CIDR Services, Programs, and Resources**

The CIDR has been a resource for teaching and learning at the University of Washington (UW) for nearly twenty-five years. Primarily a consulting center for UW faculty and TAs, CIDR also

provides a wide range of additional programs and services for the UW teaching community: we foster campus dialogue on teaching issues through our Quarterly Forum on Teaching and Learning; we play a central role in hosting the Annual Teaching and Learning Symposium, which features scholarship of teaching and learning projects by UW faculty and graduate students. In addition, each fall, we host the Annual TA Conference on Teaching and Learning for 700 to 750 new graduate TAs, as well as work annually with 120 to 150 international graduate students through CIDR's International TA Program. CIDR staff members also play central roles in a number of the UW Graduate School's Preparing Future Faculty initiatives. Finally, we have developed an extensive set of resource materials and Web guides to help faculty and TAs address their teaching and learning questions.

Though we are well known at our institution for these programs and resources, the core of CIDR's work has always remained individual consultations for faculty, TAs, and departments. We annually consult with individuals representing 100–110 different academic units at our institution on a wide range of questions related to teaching, learning, and assessment. During the 2006–2007 academic year, approximately 50 percent of our nearly 700 consultation services were for faculty members, and approximately 35 percent were for graduate TAs. The remaining 15 percent were for administrators and other university leaders. Just over 60 percent of our consultations focused on the individual faculty member or TA's course; 30 percent focused on departmental questions, such as curriculum development or program assessment, and the remaining 10 percent focused on university-wide or off-campus issues.

Because of the central role of consulting in our work, CIDR has made it a regular practice to ask for feedback on our individual consultations each quarter. This practice allows clients to provide anonymous feedback to our staff and provides a valuable client perspective on how we can continue to develop our services for the UW teaching community. Response rates to requests for feedback in the past have typically been 30 to 40 percent and have been as high as 75 percent since we moved the feedback survey form online in 2005.

Faculty and TA responses to these quarterly feedback surveys have given us confidence that many find our consultations highly

valuable. Our 2006–2007 rating for the overall value of consultations averaged 4.8 (on a 0 to 5 scale, with 5 = “highly valuable”), and responses to open-ended questions on our quarterly feedback form reveal more specifically what clients value about CIDR’s individual consultation services (see Table 12.1).

Though we learn a great deal by regularly asking clients for feedback on their recent work with us, we also realize this feedback is limited. Our hope is that consultations make a lasting contribution to a client’s teaching, but other than anecdotal reports from clients who returned to consult with us again, we have little basis for understanding the extent of longer-term contributions we might be making. Thus, to begin identifying these effects, we decided in spring 2007 to survey individuals who had consulted

**Table 12.1. Sample 2006–2007 Responses to the Quarterly Feedback Question, “What aspect of your work with CIDR helped you the most?”**

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A great resource for anyone who is entering unfamiliar territory or needs assistance in actively improving their teaching.

Enormously helpful in working with me and my co-instructor to think through questions of course design, to maximize the integration among the various assignments, and to manage the (sometimes quite complicated) questions of how to assess student work for the class.

Wonderful in getting me to think through my goals for the students, and to consider the best ways to present information. . . . As always, he assisted me in organizing my thinking. He has a talent for presenting options, and letting new ideas emerge from the discussion.

The consultant’s wealth of experience is so valuable when trying out something that is new or different for me to use in the classroom. She’s an excellent listener and so her suggestions are relevant to the issue at hand.

Learning how to more clearly articulate my learning objectives for the class and how to design the course and assignments with those goals in mind. . . . As a result, I feel students have a much clearer sense of the class and what they should take from it.

You guys rock.

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with CIDR during the preceding five years (autumn 2001 through spring 2006) and ask for their current perceptions of the value and effects of their earlier work with us.

## **Survey and Sample Preparation**

CIDR staff worked together to develop a set of survey questions to address our long-term feedback concerns. Our goal was to keep the survey brief and direct, on the assumption that people would be less likely to complete a lengthy survey and more likely to provide a higher level of detail in their responses if they had fewer questions to address.

We limited our questions to topics that could be answered by any of our clients, independent of discipline, academic rank, or CIDR service. We were also careful to develop questions that could be answered meaningfully through retrospective, reflective self-report. For example, we did not ask respondents to rate their own teaching effectiveness (which would require data of other types beyond reflective self-report) but rather, to rate the effects of our services on their teaching (which could be answered based on the client's memory of work done with CIDR).

We chose to request a combination of numerical ratings and open-ended responses. Ratings questions asked respondents to rate the extent to which consulting with CIDR had affected their teaching, the value of their work with CIDR, and the likelihood that they might recommend CIDR to a colleague. Open-ended questions were paired with each of the ratings questions, asking respondents to identify examples of effects on their teaching, specific benefits of their work with CIDR, and both recommendations and further opportunities for CIDR. Finally, since we received significantly higher response rates after moving our quarterly client feedback form online, we chose to administer the survey entirely online (see Appendix A for the printed version). We identified all consultation clients in our database between autumn 2001 and spring 2006. From this group, we removed all clients who were also working with CIDR during the current academic year (2006–2007) in order to avoid confusing effects of current CIDR consultations with effects of consultations in earlier years. We also removed clients who had consulted with CIDR

on departmental issues. We are highly interested in the long-term effects of our services to departments, but we determined that a survey with this goal would require different questions, and it was not clear in every case that the contact person for the service in our database would always be the best person to comment on departmentwide effects. Because the survey addressed effects of individual consultation services, we also chose not to address the effects of CIDR events, programs, or resources.

Because clients over the five-year period included graduate students, many of whom had since completed their degrees and left the university, we located current e-mail addresses for all individuals on the survey list. After removing clients from the current academic year, departmental clients, and clients for whom we could not locate current e-mail addresses, we had a list of 784 former individual consultation clients to contact for the survey.

Finally, we created five identical versions of the survey (one for each of the five academic years represented in the sample) and sent each former client a unique e-mail linking them directly to the version of the survey that corresponded to the most recent year they had worked with us. The e-mail invitation to complete the survey was sent out in March 2007, followed by a reminder e-mail request ten days later.

## Results

We received a total of 170 responses, giving us an overall response rate of 22 percent. The response rate for the most recent year (2005–2006) was 29 percent and varied from 18 to 22 percent across the four earlier years. Nearly 60 percent of respondents indicated that they had consulted with CIDR one to three times; 20 percent indicated consulting four to six times, and 20 percent indicated seven or more times.

The profile of our respondents represented the full range of academic disciplines and ranks that CIDR typically works with in an academic year. In comparison with the disciplinary distribution of CIDR's individual clients for 2006–2007 (see Table 12.2), humanities clients are underrepresented among the respondents, while clients in the sciences and health sciences are somewhat overrepresented. The proportion of tenure-track faculty is higher

than it is among CIDR's individual clients for 2006–2007, while the proportion of graduate students at the time of service is somewhat lower (see Table 12.3).

**Table 12.2. Academic Disciplines Represented by Respondents in Comparison to Disciplines Represented by CIDR's 2006–2007 Individual Clients**

<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Survey</i>	<i>2006–2007</i>
Engineering	14%	13%
Health sciences	9%	4%
Humanities	8%	24%
Sciences	29%	20%
Social sciences	19%	22%
Other professional schools	14%	16%
Not specified	6%	0%

**Table 12.3. Summary of Academic Ranks Represented by Respondents in Comparison to Ranks Represented by CIDR's 2006–2007 Individual Clients**

<i>Academic Rank</i>	<i>Survey</i>	<i>2006–2007</i>
Tenure-track faculty	40.0%	29.8%
Non-tenure-track faculty	15.8%	16.3%
Graduate students	38.2%	49.4%
Other	3.0%	4.3%

## Ratings

We began analyzing the data by calculating responses to the three ratings questions, shown in Table 12.4. In examining the ratings in relation to different demographic categories, we found no significant difference in overall ratings as a function of discipline, academic rank, or year of service. We identified a high, positive correlation (Kendall's tau = 0.738,  $p < 0.01$  [2-tailed]) between the extent to which respondents said their teaching was



**Table 12.4. Mean Responses to Ratings Questions  
(5 = Highly Valuable, 0 = Not At All Valuable)**

<i>Ratings Questions</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mode</i>
2. To what extent has your teaching (or how you think about teaching) been affected as a result of your work with CIDR?	3.8	4	4
3. Overall, how valuable has your work with CIDR been?	4.1	4	5
6. If a colleague asked for your help or advice about teaching, how likely would you be to mention any of the services offered by CIDR?	4.5	5	5

affected (question 2) and their perception of the value of consultations (question 3). Moderate, positive correlations were observed between the likelihood of referring a colleague (question 6) and the perceived value of consultations (Kendall's tau = 0.492,  $p < 0.01$  [2-tailed]), as well as between the likelihood of referral and the extent to which teaching had been affected (Kendall's tau = 0.432,  $p < 0.01$  [2-tailed]). The number of times that the respondent met with a consultant exhibited only low, positive correlation with the perceived value of consultations (Kendall's tau = 0.346,  $p < 0.01$  [2-tailed]) and the likelihood of referring a colleague (Kendall's tau = 0.210,  $p < 0.01$  [2-tailed]). When interpreting the results of these nonparametric statistics, we concluded that characteristics of the consultation itself were far more influential than the client's academic discipline or rank, the number of years since the consultation, or the number of consultations. To begin identifying these qualitative attributes, we turned to an analysis of responses to open-ended survey questions.

### Open-Ended Responses

After our preliminary analysis of responses to the ratings questions, we proceeded to code responses to the open-ended questions. We assigned CIDR staff to working groups associated with particular questions. Staff reviewed responses, developed a coding system,

individually coded responses, met with working groups to compare coding decisions, and came to a final consensus on codes to assign to each response. The coding system that emerged included fourteen broad categories (for example, “opportunities for reflection” or “services CIDR offers”) with three to six specific codes in each. We assigned multiple codes to some individual responses, based on the length and complexity of the response. Then, in order to help us identify the aspects of individual CIDR consultations that were both widely and highly valued, we reviewed both the frequency of responses assigned to each code and the aggregate ratings for responses associated with each code.

In the following paragraphs, we report 1) effects of individual consultations that were the most widely and highly valued, 2) benefits of individual consultations that were the most widely and highly valued, 3) recommendations and opportunities for CIDR that were the most frequently identified, and 4) comments by respondents who gave relatively lower ratings overall.

*Effects of Individual Consultations That Were Most Widely and Highly Valued.* The first open-ended question asked respondents to provide examples of ways that their teaching had been affected as a result of their work with CIDR. In our analysis of responses to this question, we identified response codes that applied to more than 10 percent of responses, and from among those, identified the codes associated with the highest ratings by respondents. The three most highly and widely valued effects of individual consultations are identified in Table 12.5.

**Table 12.5. Most Highly Rated, Frequently Occurring Types of Responses to the Question, “Please give one or more examples of ways that your teaching (or how you think about teaching) has been affected as a result of your work with CIDR.”**

<i>Type of Response</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Rating: Effect on Teaching</i>	<i>Mean Rating: Value</i>	<i>Mean Rating: Likely to Recommend</i>
Change in Practices	59	4.0	4.4	4.7
Change in Perspective	38	4.3	4.5	4.6
Student Feedback	34	3.9	4.4	4.8

The most frequent responses to this question were those that indicated a *change in teaching practices*. These were responses that indicated clients had consulted with CIDR on a specific teaching-related question or problem, and as a result, they were able to make constructive changes in their ongoing teaching practices. For example:

- Through my consultation with CIDR I have put more of an emphasis on keeping students apprised of the big picture and how individual lectures and homework assignments support the learning objectives of the course.
- I had a . . . senior seminar in which a student “shut down” the conversation and I couldn’t revive it. I contacted CIDR for advice. I now begin every seminar course with a reading and group discussion about “how to seminar” . . . It has made a huge impact on the quantity and quality of the conversations.
- They helped tremendously when I needed to convert my small-class teaching style to serve the needs of a large lecture class. They assisted with assignment design, syllabus design, articulation of learning goals, and test design. They also helped me with ideas for making a large lecture (100+) class interactive with opportunities for active student participation.

The highest ratings were not associated with these changes in teaching practices, however, but with the second most frequent type of response: those indicating a *change in perspective* that has continued to influence their teaching:

- I think more about the student for whom everything is hard. What it might mean to be uncomfortable speaking one’s mind in front of a group.
- Considering the student voice . . . began with this work with CIDR and is something I have continued in my tenure-track position at another university.
- I benefited from the sense that I was not teaching “in isolation” and that I was part of a larger community that cared about what was going on in the classroom.

A third type of response that was both frequently occurring and highly rated was the set of responses that described *learning to work constructively with student feedback*:

- I had trouble imagining how to obtain substantial, open-ended feedback from a large class and then make meaningful sense out of the volume of information. Now, I regularly get this kind of feedback and cluster/code it similarly to the way I saw in my CIDR consultations.
- It has helped me understand and use the student ratings in a constructive way, by modifying course content in response to both the midterm interview and final ratings.

***Benefits of Individual Consultations That Were Most Widely and Highly Valued.*** Our second open-ended question asked people to identify the primary benefits they had received from consulting with CIDR. The three most highly and widely valued benefits are identified in Table 12.6. In response to this question, two types of responses occurred with the highest frequency, and the most highly valued of those was the benefit of *CIDR staff expertise*. Examples of responses focusing on staff expertise included the following:

- Their expertise in student learning helps me to view my courses differently.
- Having CIDR experts share the depth of their expertise and their knowledge of what other instructors and programs have done successfully in the past. The CIDR consultants listen to

**Table 12.6. Most Highly Rated, Frequently Occurring Types of Responses to the Question, “What were the primary benefits you received from working with CIDR?”**

<i>Type of Response</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Rating: Effect on Teaching</i>	<i>Mean Rating: Value</i>	<i>Mean Rating: Likely to Recommend</i>
CIDR Expertise	31	4.4	4.6	4.8
Change in Practices	31	4.1	4.4	4.7
Change in Perspective	27	3.9	4.1	4.6

individual instructors needs and adapt solutions accordingly, i.e. we don't simply get a "one-size-fits-all" solution.

- CIDR staff was very attentive and knowledgeable. Since they had worked with people in my field before, they knew what common problems were and they could tell me what had worked and what had not. More importantly, they were able to tell me what people in other fields were doing in their classes and how their experiences could help me.

The other most frequently occurring response was the second most highly rated: the benefit of having made lasting *changes in teaching practices*. Examples included the following:

- I create clearer more achievable objectives, I teach more precisely to those objectives. I vary my activities to a greater degree with students, better reaching students with a range of learning styles. I solicit feedback in a variety of ways.
- Assessing student knowledge through classroom discussion (integrating questions in lectures)
- New ideas for lectures, resources to improve style and efficiency for teaching, seeing teaching not as a burden that takes away from research

Although respondents who identified changes in teaching practices as beneficial indicated valuing their consultations with CIDR, some also expressed frustration with challenges they faced in implementing these changes:

- Good teaching means nothing to . . . the faculty chair. Extended efforts are great for students, but counter productive to promotion.
- Lack of departmental support, little concern given to undergrads' needs.

After CIDR expertise and changes in teaching practices, the next most frequently identified benefits were those related to *change in perspective* on teaching:

- The one-to-one post-observation interview with a CIDR representative was a wonderful moment to talk "teaching" . . . It

made me realize that—regardless of what research and writing I do—my time in front of a class is a large part of my academic experience and, in order to fully enjoy that time, I can focus on the joy of sharing ideas with my students.

- It was great to talk with someone who'd visited lots of different classes and seen how they worked or didn't work. It made me feel less alone in some of the problems I was having, and also helped me work to improve my teaching.

***Recommendations and Opportunities for CIDR That Were Most Frequently Identified by Respondents.*** Our next open-ended questions asked respondents to identify recommendations for improving CIDR services and future opportunities for CIDR. Our most frequent type of response ( $n = 88$ ) to the request for recommendations was *no recommendation*. The second most frequent type of response ( $n = 36$ ) was a desire for CIDR services to have *more visibility*. For example:

- Most teachers can use some feedback and can stand to improve their teaching. I wonder how many know this resource is available?

Several ( $n = 33$ ) identified recommendations for improvements related to particular *CIDR services*.

- Spend . . . a little more time to help the professor determine what he/she wants from CIDR. All too often, we just come because we know we need help, but we're not always good at identifying what exactly we need help with.
- I found conversations most useful when they were very concrete.

Just as many respondents ( $n = 33$ ) indicated only to *continue what we are doing*:

- Can't think of anything. You're doing a great job.
- Nothing, really. You strike an excellent balance between promoting best practices according to the latest educational research and dealing with real life teaching situations that the literature overlooks.

Our request for recommendations was followed by an invitation to suggest further opportunities for CIDR to assist instructors or departments. Responses to the request for opportunities were similar to responses to the previous question. Our most frequent type of response ( $n = 101$ ) was *no recommendation*. The second most frequent type of response ( $n = 44$ ) was *more visibility* for CIDR services. For example:

- I think just being more present. I don't think that faculty always know just how much benefit can come from talking to people at CIDR. A little bit of time spent with a consultant saves enormous time/energy/sometimes misery (!) later. Maybe sell yourselves more (yucky process, but the product you have is SO good!).

Several respondents ( $n = 36$ ) suggested opportunities related to a variety of different *CIDR services*. Examples included:

- The only thing that I recommend is for CIDR to provide opportunities that are not perceived as too time and energy consuming.
- I would suggest they become advocates for students and somehow get information . . . to department heads and student listservs so that students graduating and entering the job market know what . . . a teaching portfolio is.

Finally, here too we had many respondents ( $n = 15$ ) who indicated that we continue *what we are doing*:

- I think CIDR should continue their work as it is. You guys are doing a fantastic job.
- I have trouble thinking of how you could do more, since your activities are so numerous and varied.

***Comments by Respondents Who Gave Relatively Lower Ratings.*** We identified twenty-seven respondents whose combined score for the three ratings questions was a total of 9 or less. Among those twenty-seven, ten offered no comments indicating dissatisfaction with CIDR, and

ten indicated that their relatively lower rating was based on limited contact with CIDR. For example:

- In my limited experience, the service was very helpful.
- If I taught more, I know I'd have used your services more. I have recommended you to other people and spoken highly of you.

Of the remaining seven respondents who gave us relatively lower ratings, four indicated that CIDR did not help them achieve a desired outcome; for one of these four, the perceived lack of help was due to the respondent's time constraints as an adjunct:

- It was my first time teaching, I was very nervous and wanted someone to validate that I was doing the right thing. That's what I got from you guys. But the things suggested were more than I was willing to do as an adjunct.

For three of the four, this perception was based in part on their student ratings; for example,

- CIDR was extremely helpful multiple times in helping me to redesign courses, get feedback from students, and work on improving my teaching. Unfortunately, my issues seemed to be quite intractable. No one could figure out why my student evaluations were relatively low—not colleagues, TAs, or CIDR staff. This is probably a fairly unusual situation.

The last three respondents who gave a composite rating of 9 or less expressed a perception that CIDR is not aware of the needs or challenges faced in their classes or their disciplines:

- I think the person who observed my class missed a lot because she wasn't in my field and therefore couldn't understand the content.
- Be more in touch with the sensitivity of new TAs—there are discipline differences, and sometimes TAs can view CIDR advisers as preachy or basing wide judgments about TAs based on limited evidence.



- CIDR’s “one size fits all” approach does not take into account the different needs of students in different majors or the different abilities of students in different majors. CIDR also suffers from this overly liberal assumption that students are always right and the best instructors cater to their whims. Students are almost always going to favor less work and higher grades—when instructors are punished for inflicting standards, in a school with rampant grade inflation and plummeting standards, you know that the system is broken.

We don’t want to place inordinate weight on comments made by these seven individuals (4 percent of our total number of respondents). We have many more responses in this survey and in our regular client feedback indicating that faculty and TAs recognize and appreciate our efforts to ground our work in the context of their disciplines, their departments, and their immediate teaching situations. We have received similar positive feedback on our efforts to help clients assess their teaching in more complex and substantive ways than only surveying student opinions at the end of the course. Based on this other feedback we have received, we do not take these respondents’ observations as representative of CIDR’s work overall.

However, even though these comments seem to represent the exception rather than the rule, we think there are lessons that can be learned from the responses of these seven individuals. First, these comments prompt us to be vigilant in reviewing how consistently our consulting practices reflect our intended approaches to consulting, and also how effectively we train new staff for their roles as consultants. Second, these comments confirm some important features of our work. Much of our work is based on a recognition of disciplinary distinctions and the unique set of contexts each person is negotiating in his or her own teaching. We also regularly inform clients that their ratings won’t necessarily improve as a result of their efforts to make changes in their teaching. These comments confirm for us that when clients don’t perceive our work in these ways, for whatever reason, they value their work with us much less than when clients perceive it as we intend them to.

## Discussion

We found this survey helpful for learning more about the ongoing effects of our services, including both reported effects on our clients' teaching and unanticipated effects that went beyond direct effects to their classroom practices. We found that those who gave CIDR the highest ratings are those who also reported changes in their thinking or in their teaching practices as a result of their work with CIDR, and many of these described the effects of those changes as ongoing: present-tense practices or perceptions are attributed to past-tense work with CIDR. In many ways, these responses confirmed what one might hope to hear from faculty and TAs who came to a teaching center: people who perceived that our services affected their teaching valued their work with us.

However, ratings also raised additional, unexpected questions for us. First, clients rated the value of our services more highly than they rated the effect of our services on their teaching. What, in addition to effect on their teaching, did clients value about our services? Second, clients rated their likelihood to recommend us more highly than the value of our services or the effect on their teaching. What, in addition to value and effect, would motivate them to recommend us? Responses to open-ended questions suggest at least five values added by teaching centers that go beyond direct effects on classroom practices.

First, some respondents noted that they simply didn't teach very much and so had little basis for identifying effects on their teaching. However, they still found it valuable to meet with a consultant, discuss their questions, and gain additional perspective on teaching. For instructors with limited teaching roles, teaching center consultations provide immediate access to information, resources, and support for addressing their questions about teaching.

Second, others found our services valuable for the connections we helped them form—connections both to a community of people who share an interest in teaching and to the work that members of this community are engaged in. Respondents did not always identify direct or immediate effects of these connections, but they reported finding them valuable nonetheless. Through

this survey we have learned that one important role for teaching center consultations is to provide faculty and TAs with the opportunity to learn indirectly from the teaching innovations of other faculty and TAs who work with us.

A third value many found was in the additional perspective gained through their work with CIDR. As one client noted, working with CIDR helped make it possible to “focus on the joy of sharing ideas with my students”; for another, it helped make it possible to see teaching “not as a burden that takes away from research.” For others, work with CIDR was valuable not necessarily because it solved their problems but because it helped them feel “no longer alone” in trying to solve their problems. This added appreciation of teaching—that it can be enjoyed, that not all problems can be easily solved—was another highly valued contribution of teaching center consultations.

Fourth, even among clients who identified changes in teaching practices as a benefit of their work with CIDR, some expressed the perception that the departmental climate for teaching negatively affected their classroom practices. Clients who see attention to teaching as “counterproductive to promotion,” as one of our respondents reported, find value in the opportunity to consult with like-minded colleagues outside their departments, even though they feel the contexts they are working in limit their ability to put changes fully into practice.

A fifth highly valued benefit identified by respondents was the opportunity to consult with experts. In our case at CIDR, we place considerable emphasis on our clients’ expertise and ownership of their teaching, and we rarely present ourselves as “experts.” And yet, survey results show that respondents highly value our expertise in student learning, our knowledge of what other instructors and programs have done, our understanding of teaching and learning in the disciplines, and our ability to listen and adapt to individual instructors’ needs—as one respondent put it, “dealing with real-life teaching situations that the literature overlooks.” In the institutional culture of a research university that highly values expertise, clients highly value having a teaching center as a place to consult on questions about teaching that fall outside their own areas of expertise.

This variety of reasons that clients value CIDR consultations raises one important final question for us. Because consultations on teaching are so central to our work, we typically represent ourselves on campus in terms of our contributions to teaching. However, direct effects on teaching are only one thing that clients value about their work with us, and findings from this survey have caused us to question whether we might be underrepresenting our value by focusing primarily on the changes we bring about in classrooms. This wider range of effects is by no means any easier to measure or document than direct effects on teaching, but we would not want to overlook this wider range of effects in communicating what we offer to the teaching community at our university.

## **Conclusion**

Because this was our first attempt to identify long-term effects of our consulting practices, we chose to survey broadly, but future efforts to identify longer-term effects might benefit from a more focused approach. For example, because we wanted survey questions to be relevant to all clients, we did not ask specific questions related to particular CIDR services or instructor needs. A follow-up assessment of particular groups, such as clients who requested a Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID), participants in Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) initiatives, or faculty preparing for tenure review, would allow us to ask more detailed questions related to the specific intents and effects of the consultations. We also chose to ask respondents only for information about academic identities (rank, discipline, institution), not other personal or social identities. What might we learn by looking at consultations in relation to other dimensions of client identity such as race, gender, or age?

Furthermore, we also chose to focus only on the long-term assessment of individual consultations. We would potentially learn a great deal by surveying former clients regarding longer-term effects of other CIDR activities, such as services for departments, materials disseminated through our Web site, and university-wide programs and events.

Finally, this survey raises a number of additional questions for further study that will require additional steps beyond surveying

clients for their self-reported reflections on the effects of their work with us, and we conclude by suggesting these as possible next steps for those of us who are interested in examining the roles of teaching and learning centers and the effects we have at our institutions. First, other than the self-reported reflections collected through this survey, we have little documented evidence of the effects of specific CIDR services. For example, how are clients' classroom practices affected by particular services, such as collecting student feedback or consulting on a teaching portfolio?

Second, a number of respondents commented on the influence of departments on individual instructors' teaching efforts. CIDR currently works with departments in a variety of ways, and we may be able to learn a great deal by examining how some of our ongoing departmental collaborations have influenced both the climate for teaching and the awareness and perceptions of CIDR in those departments.

Last of all, what initially motivates faculty and TAs to seek out CIDR? We now have information about what clients found helpful after they came to CIDR, but we have not yet investigated what originally motivated clients to seek us out, or what obstacles might be hindering others from seeking us out. Closer examination of these questions would help all of us at teaching centers to demonstrate and increase both our value and our impact on our campuses.

# Appendix A

## Feedback Survey

We're interested in learning more about the long-term impact of CIDR services, and we would like to ask your perspective on how your work with CIDR has contributed to your teaching. Please take a few minutes to respond to this brief survey.

### Question 1

Approximately how often have you consulted or worked with someone at CIDR?

- 1–3 times
- 4–6 times
- 7 or more times

What has been the primary focus of your work with CIDR?  
(Please check ALL that apply.)

- Consult on course, syllabus, or assignment design
- Discuss teaching issues
- Diversity and inclusive teaching
- Feedback from students—written survey
- Feedback from students—midterm interview (SGID)
- Observation of my teaching by CIDR
- Peer/colleague review of teaching
- Review a video of my teaching
- Student ratings analysis

- Teaching statement or portfolio development
- Working with other instructors (faculty or TAs)
- Working with student writing
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Question 2**

To what extent has your teaching (or how you think about teaching) been affected as a result of your work with CIDR?

(Very Much) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) (0) (Not at All)

Please give one or more examples of ways that your teaching (or how you think about teaching) has been affected as a result of your work with CIDR:

### **Question 3**

Overall, how valuable has your work with CIDR been?

(Highly Valuable) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) (0) (Not at All)

### **Question 4**

What were the primary benefits you received from working with CIDR?

### **Question 5**

What recommendations can you offer for helping CIDR be more effective?

### **Question 6**

If a colleague asked for your help or advice about teaching, how likely would you be to mention any of the services offered by CIDR?

(Very Likely) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) (0) (Not at All)

What opportunities do you see for ways that CIDR might be able to assist other instructors or your department in thinking about teaching and learning?

Where do you currently work?

University of Washington

Other: \_\_\_\_\_ What is your department?

\_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE NOTE: We will use this information only to help us analyze survey responses, which are anonymous. If you prefer not to identify your department, please let us know your school, college, or type of academic discipline (for example, engineering, social sciences, humanities, etc.).

What is your current position?

Department Chair

Professor

Associate Professor

Assistant Professor

Senior Lecturer

Lecturer

Lead TA

TA

Graduate Student

Professional Staff

Other: \_\_\_\_\_ What questions or challenges do you currently have regarding teaching?

PLEASE NOTE: We will use this information only to help us plan future CIDR activities. Because your responses are anonymous, we will not be able to respond directly to questions or challenges identified through this survey. If you have an immediate question that you would like to discuss with someone at CIDR, please contact us by sending a message to [info@cidr.washington.edu](mailto:info@cidr.washington.edu).

Thank you for taking time to give us your feedback!



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