The Four Rs: Guiding CTLs with Responsiveness, Relationships, Resources, and Research

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Abstract

We offer a framework for guiding an effective Center for Teaching and Learning: Responsiveness, Relationships, Resources, and Research. Our intention is to fill a gap in the literature on guidance for CTL leadership. These four principles are grounded in both scholarly and experiential evidence, drawing from multiple CTL directors with a range of experience levels at different center and institutional types.

Scholarship in the field of educational development and teaching and learning is rich in frameworks, paradigms, and big ideas. However, as members of the profession move into new professional roles, particularly as directors of centers, there is less guidance about key principles for effective leadership of a CTL. Such direction is useful for new directors, as they develop a 90 day plan to transition into a new position (Watkins, 2013), as well as for established leaders, as they engage in long term strategic planning or prepare for external reviews. We offer a framework for leading an effective CTL, to support institutional improvement and enhance teaching and learning, key purposes of educational development (Felten, Kalish, Pingree, & Plank, 2007). Our intention is to fill a gap in the literature on guidance for CTL leadership, responding to the recent call for the field to consider “ways to support the particular professional interests and needs of developers at different career stages” (Beach, Sorcinelli, Austin, & Rivard, 2016, pp. 24–25).

Like the field of educational development (Little, 2014), this work is grounded in both scholarly and experiential evidence. The authors are four CTL directors with a range of experience: two newer (one to two years) and two experienced (5 to 15 years). We draw these perspectives from multiple institutional contexts—two small liberal arts colleges, a midsize faith based university, and a small and a large research university. Additionally, we draw from a diversity of center types: one disciplinary focused (engineering), two that integrate teaching and learning support for both instructors and students, and two that serve a more traditional CTL function, focused on faculty development.

Need for Director Guidance

According to a recent survey, many CTL directors are relatively new to their roles, having less than a decade of experience. Most (64%) CTL leaders have been in the position for 10 or fewer years but a third have five or fewer years of experience (Beach et al., 2016). However, in comparison to scholarship about entrance to the field (Gosling, McDonald, & Stockley, 2007; Green & Little, 2013; McDonald & Stockley, 2008), there is less guidance to aid a CTL director in setting goals and priorities, and much of what exists is based on competency models for individuals.

For example, Wunsch (1993), in describing the key competencies needed to transition from a faculty development staff role to a directorship, describes a number of skillsets, such as budgeting, understanding of institutional politics, hiring and mentoring staff, engaging in program evaluation, maintaining visibility, and networking. Others, using an evidence based approach, describe a multiplicity of needed skills, knowledge, and attitudes, including strategic planning, relationship management, internal and external mentorship, knowledge of theories relating to higher education, and expertise as an effective change agent (Dawson, Britnell, & Hitchcock, 2010). Hall and Green (2016) offer a valuable cross national perspective (United Kingdom and United States), pointing to important director assets such as resilience, the ability to "manage up," and familiarity with the evidence basis of the field. This important body of scholarship describes individual competencies needed for CTL directors. However, we argue that we also must be attuned to guiding organizational principles for centers, in line with our field's growing emphasis on institutional development (Gillespie, 2010; Schroeder, 2010).

Notable exceptions to the individual based focus include *Advancing the culture of teaching on campus* (Cook & Kaplan, 2011). This edited volume offers the operational principles guiding the University of Michigan's CTL: service orientation, speedy response time, quality control, opportunism, persistence, and addressing institutional problems (Cook & Kaplan, 2011). Writing 20 years earlier, Nemko and Simpson (1991) describe nine principles, largely from the perspective of one author's directorship of the University of Georgia's CTL. This article focuses on maximizing the center's political status and advises reporting "to the top," crediting one's supervisor and solving problems for this person, involving faculty, building relationships with other campus leaders, publishing a useful newsletter, sponsoring "nurturing activities," and being self effacing.

Although these pieces offer valuable pointers, they are both from the viewpoint of large research universities. What guiding principles might be widely applicable to those in multiple institutional contexts? Furthermore, although both draw upon the rich professional history of successful directors, the field still lacks for guidance that draws from a wider perspective of the scholarship of educational development.

Below, we present a framework for effective educational development leadership based on four key principles: Responsiveness, Relationships, Resources, and Research (Figure 1). We anchor these principles in the scholarship of educational development, and we also offer an illustration of the enactment of each idea in a CTL context. Certainly, these are not the only guiding principles needed for effective CTL work, and we hope that this article provokes other perspectives on this theme. However, we select these because they have ample elasticity to be applicable to our own very different contexts. Furthermore, they are empirically validated in recent surveys of the field as being descriptive of educational development work, reflecting significant trends in the field, such as simultaneous attention to both relationship and organization building, as well as an increasing scholarly and strategic focus (Beach et al., 2016; Gibbs, 2013).

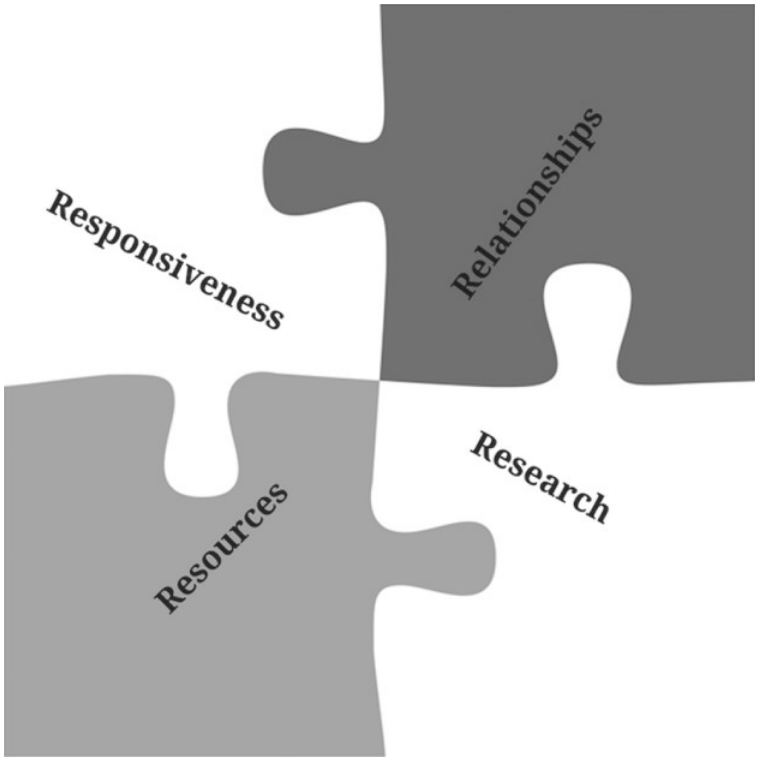

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Figure 1. 4R Framework for Effective CTL Leadership

Responsiveness

For Cook (2011, p. 33), “The first, and probably most important, principle is being service oriented and responsive” because CTL “initiatives have the most impact when they align with university initiatives.” Many others concur that congruence with institutional mission and priorities is the hallmark of effective CTL practice (Cook & Marincovich, 2010; Knapper, 2016; Wunsch, 1993). Furthermore, as the field takes on greater roles in organizational development (Gibbs, 2013; Schroeder, 2010), and CTLs are charged with projects such as curricular change and evaluation of teaching, responsiveness to institutional priorities increasingly becomes standard operating procedure.

This turn is suggested by two surveys of educational development practitioners. Interestingly, data collected almost 20 years ago indicated that many CTL staff preferred to work on the individual level, through services such as faculty consultations (Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, & Beach, 2005). However, a more recent survey of the field suggested that developers were becoming more engaged with structural initiatives like course and curriculum redesign (Beach et al., 2016, p. 120). A recent study of Canadian CTLs also found that most (70%) mapped their centers’ strategic plans to their institutions’ strategic plans (Kolomitro & Anstey, 2017). Although some lament this focus on helping senior administrators implement new initiatives (Knapper, 2016), many acknowledge “the potential synergy achievable when responding to department level needs in conjunction with individual faculty needs” (Beach et al., 2016, p. 120).

An application of this principle is the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching in Engineering’s (CRLT Engin) anticipation of and response to the University of Michigan’s College of Engineering Diversity Strategic Plan. (CRLT Engin is a disciplinary specific partnership between the College of Engineering and the university’s main teaching and learning center, CRLT.) In the 2015 to 2016 academic year, the University engaged in a campus wide diversity strategic planning process, in which 49 units (including all schools and colleges) developed a diversity strategic plan. The campus wide plan seeks “to create an inclusive and equitable campus climate” (University of Michigan, 2016, p. 5), and in response, CRLT and CRLT Engin’s own strategic plans “further strengthen the existing focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)” and “offer a range of campus wide and customized programs that explicitly focus on DEI” (Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, 2016). This strategy was implemented at multiple levels—campus wide, school/college, department, and individual (Takayama, Kaplan, & Cook Sather, 2017). For CRLT Engin, the first step was to examine the content of all teaching orientations to identify ways to more explicitly address DEI topics in the engineering context.

Independently, the College of Engineering's strategic planning committee also sought to improve the training and professional development of its instructors. Specifically, they wanted to develop learning opportunities that facilitate a more equitable and inclusive learning environment for students (Michigan Engineering, 2016), by expanding resources and instruction on the topic of inclusive teaching for instructional faculty and graduate student instructors (GSIs) in the college (Michigan Engineering).

For CRLT Engin to address this need, it had to devise a responsive strategy that would support the professional development of new *and* experienced instructors at all levels: faculty, GSIs, and undergraduate instructional aides (IAs). Initially, the plan was to focus on new instructors. The center designed and integrated a 75 minute inclusive teaching workshop during orientation programs for new faculty and IAs. New instructors engaged in discussions about social identities, discovered how classroom climate impacts teaching and learning, and identified classroom strategies they might employ to teach inclusively. GSI orientation already incorporated explicit inclusive teaching training using interactive theater, but the session was revised to focus on allowing more opportunities to engage in discussions about student and instructor identities. From 2016 to 2017, a total of 502 new instructors (24 faculty, 283 GSIs, 195 IAs) participated in a session on inclusive teaching during the three teaching orientations.

To respond to the College's interest in supporting *all* instructional faculty, CRLT Engin initiated a 30 minute interactive workshop focused on classroom climate, which could be incorporated into department faculty meetings. With the support of the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, CRLT Engin piloted the inclusive climate workshop at a meeting for all of the associate deans and department chairs in the College. This 30 minute session presented a framework for classroom climate (adapted from Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010), provided multiple classroom scenarios for instructors to discuss degrees of inclusion or marginalization, and offered strategies for promoting an inclusive classroom. The session with the department chairs supported the College's agenda, and it also gave the department chairs the opportunity to experience the session and hear the positive testimony from another department chair whose department served as the initial pilot. Several departments invited CRLT Engin to present the session during department meetings and faculty retreats. For these sessions, CRLT Engin was able to further customize the workshop by allowing department chairs to choose from a range of scenarios or to propose new scenarios that would best fit their context and concerns.

During a seven month period, CRLT Engin was able to facilitate seven sessions to 117 faculty members representing six departments/programs in the college. In post workshop evaluations, nearly all agreed that the session was valuable and that it improved their ability to use inclusive teaching practices. Senior leadership also valued the program, and the center's responsiveness for creating it, as indicated by an associate dean who was also the college's DEI lead:

> Implementation of the College of Engineering's Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) created a significant demand for new programming, for example on inclusive teaching methods for faculty and graduate student instructors. CRLT Engin's capacity and willingness to meet this need has been essential in addressing our DEI objectives. CRLT Engin's responsiveness was especially valuable as events on campus and on the national stage raised new issues for educational climate, and instructors sought resources to help them address concerns in the classroom.

Similarly, an associate dean for undergraduate education noted, "It's important for there to be open communication between learning centers, the faculty, and the administration to ensure that the goals and implementation of any new programs or instructional initiatives are consistent with both the overarching values of the institution and the realities on the ground."

After the successful implementation of these two initiatives, the following summer, CRLT Engin focused on expanding the staff's capacity to support instructors around issues of diversity, equity and inclusion, by engaging in a weekly Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) diversity reading group. In this way, the entire staff of educational developers would be better equipped with relevant educational literature to further support programs and services and respond to the ongoing needs of the College.

This example, involving faculty and CTL staff professional development, illustrate how one center was able to be responsive to department, college, and university priorities. This case also illustrates an aspect of the guidelines that may get lost in a simple reading of "responsiveness," connoting mere reaction. Instead, although working within stated institutional priorities, CTL staff expressed leadership and innovation in deciding how best to support these important strategic initiatives. Because faculty are motivated by institutional values (Blackburn & Lawrence, 2002), key lessons for a CTL director are to be attuned to articulated strategic priorities at multiple institutional levels and to be proactive about aligning center programs with these goals.

Relationships

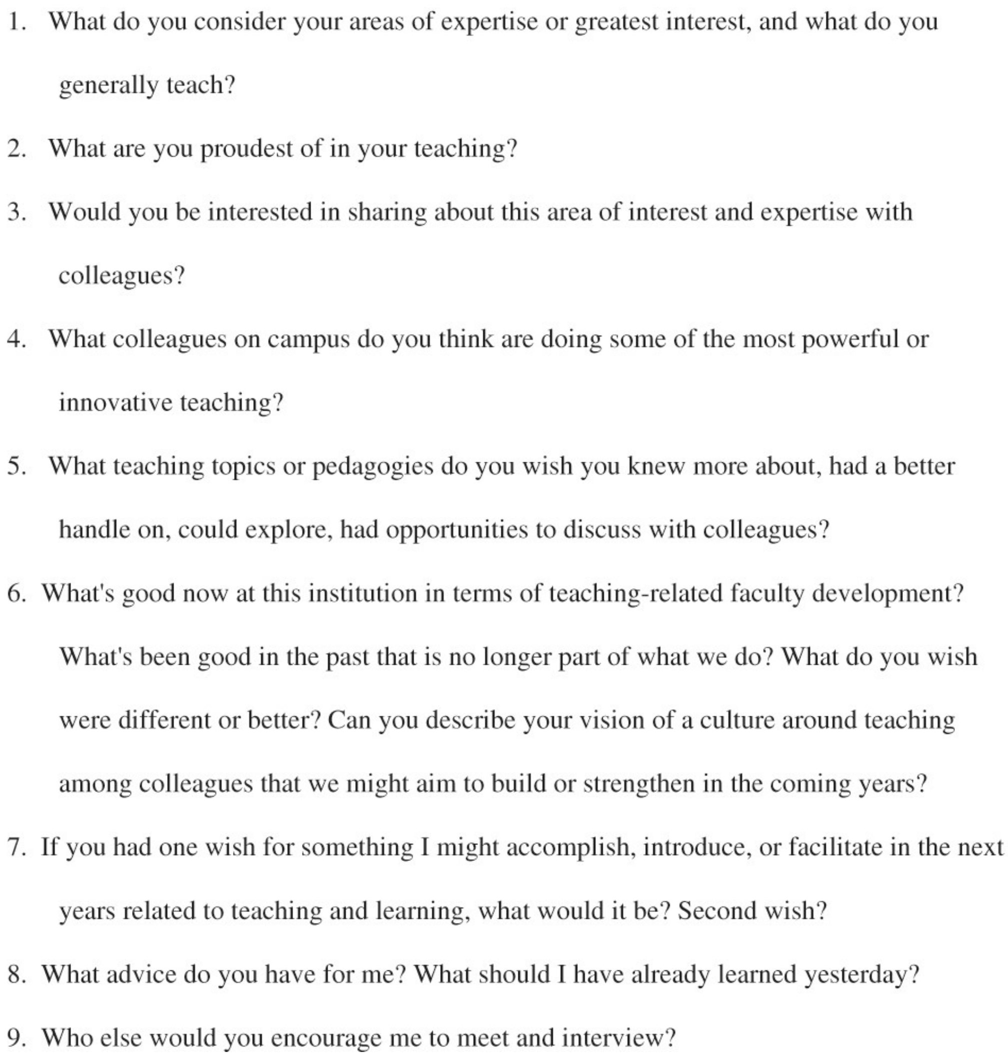
Relationships are core to effective CTLs, whether vertical, lateral, internal, or external (Little, 2015). Connections with high level administrators are clearly critical to garner resources, and networking and communication skills are needed to maintain close connections with central leadership (Aitkin & Sorcinelli, 1994; Seldin, 1995). Likewise, lateral relationships with academic departments and other centers enable a CTL to expand its reach. Beach et al. (2016, p. 37) note that "one of the hallmarks of a networked faculty development enterprise is collaboration across campus to reach a range of audiences." As evidence, they report that over three quarters (77%) of CTLs collaborate with other campus units, most frequently, technology centers.

A third vector of connectivity is with instructors and students, with several practitioners describing relational skillsets—such as rapport, coaching, input, or grassroots leadership—as essential to effective CTL work (Cohen, 2010; Lester & Kezar, 2012 ; Taylor, 2017). Indeed, this is the case because many signature programs in educational development, such as faculty learning communities (FLCs) or new faculty orientations, are social activities. Furthermore, the development of a sense of community has been identified as one key source of motivation for engaging faculty in CTL initiatives (Burdick, Doherty, & Schoenfeld, 2015; Wergin, 2001). Finally, external interactions are also important to our work, with many centers participating in CTL consortia or regular meetings with center leaders at peer institutions (Cook & Marincovich, 2010). Below, two illustrations from Berea College (Kentucky, United States) and Otterbein University (Ohio, United States) demonstrate how a director's early conversations with campus constituencies can powerfully shape the direction of a CTL.

At Berea College, deep historical connections between student and faculty development predated the founding of a formal teaching center in the mid 1990s. The link between student and faculty development continues to inflect the work of the unit, even as it has seen multiple, dramatic shifts in identity, focus, and leadership over the course of almost 30 years. Long home to a writing/learning center and to faculty development work that was initially devoted to communication across the curriculum, what is now the CTL expanded in 2012 to target a broader range and depth of faculty development work then again expanded in 2015 to incorporate learning support through academic coaching for students. Through targeted interactions and intentionally cultivated relationships with senior administrators, faculty, academic staff members, and directors of other Berea centers, the CTL director, new to the College in 2012, had repeatedly heard of widespread concern for students who struggled not with intellectual capability, but with motivation, effective study skills, and metacognitive awareness. A desire to respond to these concerns led to the hiring of a professional staff member—a learning specialist—whose expertise would complement the work of the writing center, housed in the CTL, as well as other student academic support efforts on campus. In this way, key relationships with stakeholders *external* to the CTL at multiple levels of the organization contributed to a new direction for the unit. Unexpectedly, this hire also led to an important *internal* relationship between the director and the learning specialist as they sought to capitalize on the intersection between their areas.

In his first two semesters at Berea, the learning specialist participated as a member of the year long New Faculty Seminar, one component of the CTL's regular slate of faculty development work. His knowledge about student development and student learning, his insights about academic coaching, plus his direct access to student perspectives and experiences in his academic coaching work drove a new and deeper set of conversations about teaching and learning for the faculty participants in the seminar. What was more, an intentional sustained partnership began to flourish for him and the director, and the following year, he helped co facilitate the seminar for a new cohort. At the same time that his contributions deepened the work of faculty development, a new understanding of faculty perspectives and expectations had a significant impact on his thinking about what he would communicate and work on with his student clients. Finally, on his recommendation, Saundra McGuire's *Teach Students How to Learn* (McGuire, 2015), a recent book that urges faculty to directly address motivation, metacognition, and study skills through their teaching, became a shared text for members of the seminar and they, in turn, led campus wide conversations about it as the common reading for faculty and staff at the annual August Faculty Workshop.

In another institutional context at Otterbein University, an array of deep, sustained relationships external to the unit played a different but no less important role for its CTL. Before the hiring of a director to found a new center in 2002, faculty and staff members had already identified educational development approaches they found promising, and they particularly hoped to see the introduction of FLCs. Prior to launching a pilot FLC, the new director (in her first 90 days of center director work) engaged in two months of targeted informational interviews with campus leadership at all levels, and with faculty, academic staff members, and students. In order to shape the information gathering effort, she developed a loose protocol to guide conversations for each different group that would to allow her to discern patterns of need and interest, to gain a sense of the "lay of the land" culturally, and to identify potential participants and allies for a new FLC (Figure 2). Through conversations, she learned that there was already significant groundwork at the University for teaching using service learning, although there was no formal program yet to support the work, and she was able to identify which faculty members were experimenting with the pedagogy. These early relationship building conversations allowed her to make connections with faculty and staff members who shared an existing interest and might be willing to explore the semi structured facilitated experience afforded them by a FLC. Seven of these faculties eagerly signed on to explore the literature and experiment with service learning course design in an FLC context.



1. What do you consider your areas of expertise or greatest interest, and what do you generally teach?
2. What are you proudest of in your teaching?
3. Would you be interested in sharing about this area of interest and expertise with colleagues?
4. What colleagues on campus do you think are doing some of the most powerful or innovative teaching?
5. What teaching topics or pedagogies do you wish you knew more about, had a better handle on, could explore, had opportunities to discuss with colleagues?
6. What's good now at this institution in terms of teaching-related faculty development? What's been good in the past that is no longer part of what we do? What do you wish were different or better? Can you describe your vision of a culture around teaching among colleagues that we might aim to build or strengthen in the coming years?
7. If you had one wish for something I might accomplish, introduce, or facilitate in the next years related to teaching and learning, what would it be? Second wish?
8. What advice do you have for me? What should I have already learned yesterday?
9. Who else would you encourage me to meet and interview?

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Figure 2. Relationship Building Protocol for a CTL Director's Initial Interviews with Faculty

Beyond participant satisfaction, positive outcomes for the pilot FLC included significant service learning course redesign for all seven members and substantive contributions to a University initiative to launch a new Center for Community Engagement. The pilot's success led to opportunities for additional and deeper work with FLCs. On the basis of an open and supportive relationship with the Vice President for Academic Affairs, to whom the director reported, the director was invited to draft a grant for a $100,000 three year FLC project that came to involve dozens of faculty and staff members and that eventually seeded many important change initiatives and new programs, including a massive general education revision and the introduction of an intensive writing program. Prior to writing the grant, the director's participation in a summer institute on developing FLCs (offered by Milt Cox of Miami University) provided necessary orientation and grounding for developing the program and facilitated the grant writing. Furthermore, ensuing connections with FLC program development work statewide and nationally became an important professional and personal context for the director, providing a network of expertise to turn to with questions as well as a source of many new professional connections. Such powerful and sustained work was only possible due to layers and layers of relationships with colleagues across the institution and external to it.

Facilitating change lies at the heart of an educational developer's occupation, regardless of institutional type, position description, or context. Without strong relationships, guiding and supporting change is difficult, if not impossible, because the work is inherently people focused (Felten, Little, Ortquist Ahrens, & Reder, 2013). For this reason, cultivating and maintaining a wide array of relationship types is essential for any educational development leader, and it is certainly a key priority in the first days of a new directorship.

Resources

An effective CTL must be able to navigate the flow of resources, whether financial, spatial, temporal, or political. To illustrate, Wunsch (1993, p. 279) writes that “a competent director…needs to know how monies flow through the institution and the unspoken rules for getting and spending it.” Resources may also include space, as signaled by the title of a classic article on CTL prestige, “The role of educational developers in institutional change: From the basement office to the front office” (Van Note Chism, 1998). Other affordances that enable educational developers to serve as effective change agents include time, titles, reporting lines, staff to faculty ratios, and professional development budgets (Van Note Chism, 1998). Resources also include information, as all CTL staff need a savvy understanding of institutional politics and knowledge of how to get things done, as well as a thorough understanding of institutional needs.

At their most effective, CTL directors are able to communicate the inherently reciprocal nature of CTL resource investments: resources (particularly money and information) flow both into and out of the CTL. For instance, CTLs need financial resources to compensate staff, host events, and purchase books and other materials. But CTLs also often serve as funders for campus wide grants, awards, stipends, and other incentives to faculty participation in development opportunities. Furthermore, CTLs invest in their own knowledge building (through professional development, immersion in the research literature, data collection on their own campuses, and service on campus wide committees), not for their own sake but in order to share that knowledge with faculty and administrators.

Other examples of the reciprocity of financial resources include:

- The CTL collaborating with faculty members applying for external grants focused on education. For instance, the CTL could support faculty development or assessment components of a grant.
- Cosponsoring events with academic units. Often, the CTL is well positioned to provide human resources for things like marketing, registration, logistics, and personnel.
- Facilitating unit level faculty retreats on curriculum reform where the neutrality and facilitation skills of CTL staff may be especially welcome. In such situations, CTL staff not only share their particular skills and knowledge, but in doing so, save the academic unit money it might otherwise need for external facilitator fees.

The reciprocity inherent in resource acquisition and usage is key: The better a CTL uses institutional resources (and demonstrates the effectiveness of that usage), the more likely it is to be successful in requesting additional resources in the future. Indeed, a CTL director may be more likely to successfully garner resources if those resources are framed as *for something more important than the CTL itself*. In other words, the resources requested—financial, spatial, human, political—should serve something larger than the CTL, whether that be enhanced faculty motivation, increased student learning and engagement, expanded adoption of evidence based pedagogies, or more integrated curricula.

Two examples from Saint Louis University’s (SLU) Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning help to underscore the inherent reciprocity in a CTL’s relationship to resources. One relatively small, transferable example of the reciprocity of CTL financial resources is the Reinert Center’s *Try It!* Summer Mini Grants. These small grants typically provide up to $500 to $1,500 to support faculty who wish to “try one new thing” in their teaching. Past mini grants have supported the integration of new technologies, the purchase of portable white boards, travel to summer teaching conferences, and a range of other course based resources. The availability of these grants, and the maximum amount of funding, varies year to year, because the Reinert Center offers them only when it anticipates a surplus in the operating budget for the year. The *Try It!* Grants provide an opportunity for the Reinert Center to be explicit about resource reciprocity: the university invests financially in the CTL as a resource for instructors, and where possible, the CTL returns a portion of those financial resources directly to faculty in order to support course level teaching changes.

The mini grants were an offshoot of a larger fellowship program, which further exemplifies the reciprocal nature of CTL resources. The Reinert Center's Innovative Teaching Fellowship supports faculty who are selected to teach in SLU's Learning Studio, a highly flexible, technology rich experimental classroom space overseen by the Center. Thanks to funds dedicated specifically for this purpose in the annual operating budget, the Reinert Center provides funding for a course buy out for each Innovative Teaching Fellow in the semester prior to teaching in the Learning Studio. During the course release semester, Fellows meet weekly with an assigned Reinert Center Instructional Developer to (re)design the courses they will teach in the experimental classroom. (Instructional Developers share frameworks for course design, as well as evidence based practices that support student centered learning.) Also during this period, the Reinert Center has funds to invest in targeted enhancements to the Learning Studio—such as through added software and hardware, new physical assets for the space, and the like—based on the faculty members' instructional needs and learning goals. In the second semester of the fellowship, as Fellows teach their newly redesigned courses in the Learning Studio, their Instructional Developers are on site to support any unexpected pedagogical or technological challenges.

These targeted, sustained investments of time, money, and personnel pay dividends, for the faculty members, the CTL, and the institution. The experience empowers individual faculty members to engage in course level teaching transformations while also changing their broader habits of course design and instruction. Reports submitted by fellows during the course (re)design phase consistently identify three key changes adopted in how faculty design courses: a backward design approach to planning, the development of authentic assessments, and the shift from instructor focused to student focused uses of class time. At the conclusion of their fellowship year, most fellows describe in detail the excitement, discomfort, and effectiveness of the shift from instructor oriented to learner directed courses and activities. One introductory humanities course went from a lecture based model to a "choose your own adventure" model in which student groups spent the first weeks of the term developing and lobbying for different syllabi to shape the semester. A class wide vote determined which syllabus would govern the course, increasing students' buy in, as well as their understanding of how the work of that discipline is conducted.

Fellows also share their experiences publicly, presenting at the Reinert Center's annual Learning Studio Symposium and at national and international conferences, and some conduct research and publish on the student engagement and learning that occurs in the Studio. In many ways, this program touches on all four of the most prominent motivators of faculty involvement—autonomy, community, recognition, and efficacy—identified by Wergin (2001), even as it creates tangible and intangible benefits for the CTL and the institution.

The program brings recognition to and increases the contributions of the Reinert Center. CTL staff have been able to share lessons learned in the Studio with facilities and information technology services in order to enhance other classroom spaces on campus. This work also has led to the CTL director's inclusion on campus wide committees, such as the Learning Technologies Advisory Committee and the Strategic Planning Steering Committee. Service on these committees represents opportunities for the reciprocal acquisition and use of informational resources: The CTL director both shares and gains knowledge at an organizational level, which enhances the CTL's ability to respond to emerging needs while also expanding the campus's collective understanding that classroom design is an essential element of instructional design. All of this work brings recognition to the Reinert Center, but perhaps even more importantly, to the university. The reciprocity inherent in the CTL's use of its financial capital also can work to enhance its social capital within its institution, even as the specific programs funded by the CTL bolster the social capital of the individuals who participate in them. (For more on the important role social capital can play for educational developers, see Carpenter, Coughlin, Morgan, & Price, 2011.)

Of course, the university's investment in the Learning Studio and in the Innovative Teaching Fellowship that sustains it did not happen overnight. It was the result of a past CTL director's personal interest in technology rich learning spaces, vision for the Reinert Center as a campus leader in learning space design, and ability to connect her vision to the then Provost's desire for more visible innovations in classroom teaching. Ultimately, the creation of the Innovative Teaching Fellowship program, and the Reinert Center's leadership for the Learning Studio, resulted in part because of the CTL's already strong reputation as a valuable university resource.

In many ways, resources are inseparable from the other principles discussed here. Advocating for and sharing resources helps CTL directors to demonstrate responsiveness to institutional context; often, our requests for resources are successful because of our relationships with faculty, administrators, and other leaders in higher education and educational development. Furthermore, demonstrating a clear, evidence based understanding of the needs (both known and anticipated) on our campuses creates a position of strength when CTL directors request additional resources.

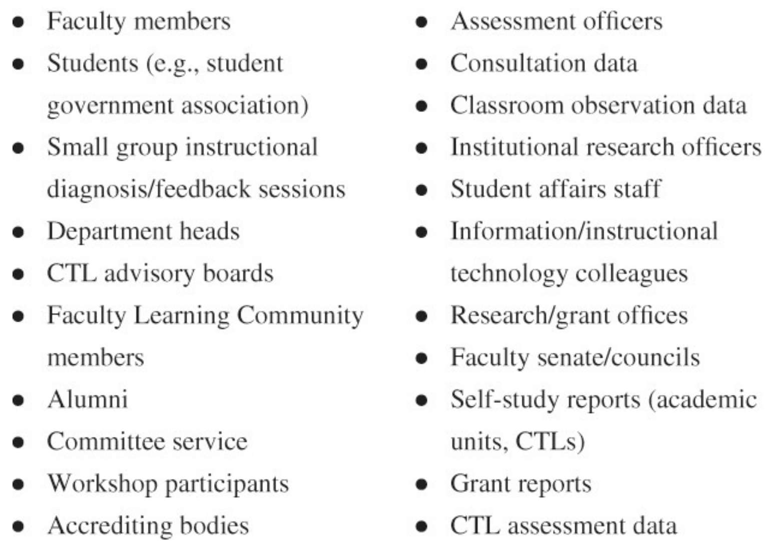
Research

The final principle is research, or use of evidence based practices and the scholarship of educational development to inform CTL work. Beach et al. (2016, p. 108) note the growing importance of this principle for Center work, claiming, "Faculty development may be entering an Age of Evidence, characterized by a focus on evidence based teaching and learning, interest in research on teaching practices in the disciplines (discipline based education research), assessment of student learning outcomes, and institutional needs for quality improvement." (See also Gibbs, 2013, for an international perspective.) Several have pointed to the growing role of centers in assessment initiatives (Beach et al., 2016; Wright, Goldwasser, Jacobson, & Dakes, 2017) or action research (Cook, Wright, & O'Neal, 2007).

An application of research to CTL practice involves staff taking a scholarly approach to programs and services to address three key questions for a Center:

- Does it work? Staying connected with the scholarship of educational development is helpful to gain information on rigorous evaluation of programs, such as the Condon, Iverson, Manduca, Rutz, and Willett (2015) study suggesting an association between faculty development and student learning. CTLs do not have to reinvent the wheel if others have already done the work.
- What works? CTLs can play a key role in change initiatives by collecting information from peer institutions (Knapper, 2016), and they can draw on research about what programs work for various objectives to plan initiatives (e.g., Stes, Min Leliveld, Gijbels, & Pategem, 2010; Van Note Chism, Holley, & Harris, 2012).
- How do I make it work? Context matters in educational development work (Steinert et al., 2006), and careful needs assessments and program evaluations can help tailor an approach to a particular campus context.

For example, a recent strategic planning process at Brown University's Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning relied upon multiple data sources to shape its five year plan: key findings from the field, extant student and faculty survey data, document analysis of department diversity plans, and multiple focus groups with campus constituencies (Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning, 2017). Figure 3 offers a list of potential campus data sources that a CTL director might use to conduct a needs assessment.



- Faculty members
- Students (e.g., student government association)
- Small group instructional diagnosis/feedback sessions
- Department heads
- CTL advisory boards
- Faculty Learning Community members
- Alumni
- Committee service
- Workshop participants
- Accrediting bodies
- Assessment officers
- Consultation data
- Classroom observation data
- Institutional research officers
- Student affairs staff
- Information/instructional technology colleagues
- Research/grant offices
- Faculty senate/councils
- Self-study reports (academic units, CTLs)
- Grant reports
- CTL assessment data

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Figure 3. Potential Data Sources for Understanding Campus Needs

Research can also be used as an "on ramp" to educational development, engaging constituencies who may not otherwise visit a CTL. Especially in a research university setting—where scholarship is the coin of the realm—but also in other institutional contexts, CTLs can use faculty, graduate student and undergraduate student interest in research as a means of advancing a teaching and learning agenda. Helping administrators, faculty and students reframe their ideas about teaching to researchable questions can have many powerful impacts: faculty and students learn educational research skills; administrative units answer teaching and learning questions using their own data; and faculty and graduate students document, publish, and get grants based on the changes they have made and assessed in their own classrooms. As a neutral hub, many CTLs are well positioned to carry out research that is otherwise perceived as political yet answers "burning" institutional questions about teaching and learning.

As an example, in Fall 2016, Brown university undergraduate student government representatives proposed the development of an online interface that would survey a student who dropped a course, with the results going back to the instructor. This query arose out of the Brown community's interest in fostering inclusive learning environments, as documented in one of the university's strategic plans. From the perspective of the Sheridan Center, a study of the reasons Brown students attribute to their course drop decisions would be in line with strategic priorities, and the data could inform future Center initiatives. Furthermore, because the Center was in "neutral space," by conducting the study, it could maintain faculty and student confidentiality.

Sheridan worked with university faculty, administrators, and representatives of the student government to write brief survey questions that were distributed to undergraduates who dropped a course. They analyzed the data, which were presented to multiple groups—chairs, deans, provosts, and students—and published in the student newspaper. Although the study was only very recently conducted, its results are already being used for communications to advisors, to inform Sheridan offerings, and to guide university policy on the deadline for when students can drop a course (Lo, Ittner, & Wright, forthcoming).

Three important ways that a CTL can use research to promote change include use of evidence based practices, data based strategic planning, and conducting collaborative research that informs practice. These approaches may be particularly powerful in a research university context, where research is used as an on ramp to promote attention to teaching. However, attention to being a scholarly educational developer—Does it work? What works? How do I make it work?—is a lens that is critical no matter the context. Furthermore, making public responses to those same questions by contributing to the scholarship of educational development can enable a center to deepen the evidence basis of the field for other CTLs.

Conclusion

We offer the “Four Rs” framework as a heuristic to help guide the work of effective CTLs. The framework—Responsiveness, Relationships, Resources, and Research—has been influential in shaping how we collaborate with CTL staff and other campus partners to guide our centers, and these principles also have resonances with key trends in the field. Although we have presented these principles individually and sequentially, in practice, we find that they are very interrelated. For example, to be responsive to institutional priorities, CTL directors must use research based approaches and their campus relationships to best decide how to allocate their Center’s resources.

Context will also play a key role in how these principles could be instantiated on a particular campus, as well as the weight afforded to them. For example, a larger CTL might have the staff to do research on teaching and learning questions, while a one person CTL might find it more beneficial to refer to evaluation research done by others, to preserve resources for outreach and services. Similarly, an individual or a faculty committee without a center might prioritize resources—in order to build up an institutionally sustainable CTL—above other principles.

The Four Rs framework is offered as a guide for CTL directors, particularly new CTL directors, to help them make sense of the role of a CTL today on campus, and to enable them to advance their unique mission on campus. Others have pointed to educational development’s turn away from a reliance on specific tactics (e.g., workshops) to a more strategic, multi pronged focus (Gibbs, 2013). With this framework, we fill a gap in the literature about a guiding strategic principles for CTLs that are applicable across multiple contexts. However, this framework is not intended to be an exhaustive list of characteristics and, indeed, our hope is that these four principles are generative of others, such as reciprocity, reputation, or reflectiveness.

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