

The University of Georgia
2013 Academic Affairs Faculty Symposium

Brasstown Valley Resort

March 22 - 23, 2013

Panel II. Faculty Support

Introductory Comments

Ed Schwartz

Assistant Director of Classroom Support and Learning Spaces

Center for Teaching and Learning

As the new head of CTL Classroom Support, I can honestly say that I am just beginning to understand the depth of services that we provide. Clearly there are many challenges keeping up with the technology in over 500 teaching spaces in over 60 buildings across campus, and managing the staff and equipment to keep these spaces running is no small task. We are currently in the process of upgrading most of the campus systems to be able to accept the HDMI signals that are becoming the new standard for computer input into video projectors, but much of the technology associated with this change is being updated as well. For example, the aspect ratio of the computer images has changed significantly from the 4:3 aspect ratio of what used to be the television standard to the widescreen 16:9 with the current HD and Blu-ray standard. This presents numerous challenges with the current infrastructure of projectors, screens, controlling equipment and associated cables.

As technology moves forward, we need to constantly change to keep up with the latest and most effective tools available to us. We know that there is a limited life for the technology, so we have developed avenues to replace the equipment. Unfortunately, it is far more difficult to keep up with the physical setup in the classroom and, in fact, this is often not even part of the conversation. Little thought is given to the life or effectiveness of the furniture or classroom layout. For example, how do active learning teaching styles work in a room with fixed seating? Clearly not well. We know that active learning and engaging students in the classroom is far more effective than lecture, but the reality is that we are still creating large lecture halls that are no different from the lecture halls of 100 years ago. The classrooms today may be a bit more comfortable to sit in and have projectors and white boards replacing the old chalkboards, but in many cases, they are still spaces that are configured in ways identical to spaces of the past. We all know what these spaces look like and are all comfortable with them, but these classrooms don't provide any of the flexibility that active learning and the newer, more effective pedagogy requires.

I have been in the business of faculty support for over 30 years and the challenges are still the same today as they were when I started. Faculty require a strong advocate for the physical and technological needs required in the classroom so they can practice the current pedagogy in their classes that is best suited to their discipline. Just as they need strong advocates to help them understand and integrate the most effective pedagogy in their fields. The best way to ensure that their needs are met is through open and frequent communications between faculty and their

partners in classroom support and faculty development. These partners need to include architects, facilities, IT, and CTL along with the department and college.

Of course there are also the legacy issues that complicate matters. For example, CTL owns all of the equipment in some classrooms, some of the equipment in some classrooms, and none of the equipment in other classrooms. EITS, of course, owns most of the computers and facilities owns the furniture. Even with these complicating factors, we still should be able to streamline the support for faculty to have a reasonable space where in which to teach. Our job is to support faculty so they can do their jobs using technology effectively and make the physical spaces as useful as possible. Faculty should not have to struggle to use technology effectively in their classes and should not have to struggle with the spaces to implement the most current and effective pedagogies. CTL is ready to assist any faculty with their use of technology and to make sure that they have the understanding to use it effectively, but the physical teaching spaces across campus will take some effort to fix.

The Large Residential Classes break-out group at this symposium identified many important issues that need to be addressed. Critical to many of these issues was the need to include faculty in the design of classroom spaces, so they can provide valuable input to allow them to meet their changing needs with regard to the best practices in teaching pedagogy.

Here are some of the challenges that we face that must be addressed. Clearly, many of these challenges have no easy answer and need to be addressed over time.

How do you inspire faculty to use new techniques and technologies?

Just because we have the latest technologies doesn't mean that the faculty will use it, understand it, or even understand why it is important. We need to be better at informing faculty of best practices and provide the inspiration to embrace them.

How do you provide training to faculty to use these techniques and technologies effectively? Given the time constraints of many faculty, finding the time to completely understand the technology and pedagogy becomes a challenge. It is far easier to do what is comfortable rather than take time to do what is more effective. Also, keeping up with technology and best practices with pedagogy is time consuming. We need to find an effective way to get faculty to find the time to take the necessary training.

How do you scale the support for these techniques and technologies across campus and to a diverse faculty?

Making technology available is, in many ways, easier than training faculty to use them effectively. The support for all faculty to use technology is just as critical as having the technology available to them. A unified approach to these challenges is critical. Once a faculty is committed to using a new technology or pedagogy, we will be ready to support them.

I am optimistic that these questions can be properly addressed and look forward to these challenges. I also welcome the opportunity to serve the faculty at The University of Georgia.