

Faculty at Mid-Career: A Program to Enhance Teaching and Learning

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ABSTRACT: While the number of mid-career faculty currently in U.S. higher education is significant, professional development programming that addresses the teaching and learning issues of this population has not been a priority. This article describes the Mid-Career Teaching Program (MCTP) and presents data that assesses its impact on participants' professional and personal lives. Survey and interview results indicate positive changes in teaching behaviors and knowledge as well as an increase in teaching satisfaction and confidence. Faculty also reported that MCTP renewed their energy and enthusiasm and positively impacted their life outside of the academy.

KEY WORDS: mid-career; faculty development; faculty vitality; career span; renewal.

Achieving mid-career status in academia has its merits. Days are no longer driven by the tenure race, and plans for retirement can be put off until tomorrow. Yet the need to sustain a productive career, which includes teaching, research and service, is a challenge that still must be

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met for several more years. In this article we describe a faculty development effort that addresses one aspect of this challenge: maintaining vitality in teaching throughout one's career. We present an innovative teaching enrichment program that is specifically designed to enhance the instructional practices of mid-career faculty, and then we share the results of a follow-up study of program participants at the University of Minnesota.

Faculty Who Are No Longer “New” to Higher Education

Once faculty members achieve tenure, they typically have been in higher education for several years; they are no longer new to campus life or the practices of the institution. Often such faculty hold appointments at the “Associate Professor” or “Professor” level, though specific titles may vary according to the type of institution in which the faculty member serves. The literature often refers to such faculty as experienced faculty, or as mid-career or senior faculty. What these various terms have in common is that they all pertain to faculty members who are no longer at the early stage of their careers.

Currently the number of faculty members in U.S. higher education reaching the mid and later years of their careers is significant. More than two-thirds of full-time faculty are over the age of 50 (Bland & Bergquist, 1997). In addition, data show that approximately half of the full-time faculty in today's colleges and universities are well beyond the early stages of their careers, as 22% of full-time faculty members hold the rank of associate professor and 27% hold full professor status (“Number of Full-time Faculty,” 1999).

Promoting faculty productivity throughout the span of a career has been targeted as an issue for over a century. In their study of faculty development in the United States, Gaff and Simpson (1994) reported that early 20th century efforts focused on the need for faculty to be experts in a discipline. Higher education instituted the sabbatical leave, funding for professional conferences, and opportunities to conduct research as the primary mechanisms to support faculty vitality in their content area. In the 1970's, professional development efforts shifted from focusing only on the research role to emphasizing the teaching role as well. Students protested about “irrelevant courses and uninspired teaching” and “exposed the myth that all that is required to be a good teacher is to know one's subject” (p. 168). At the same time, new research published during this period suggested that teaching and learning were complex subjects that faculty could study. In response to both students'

complaints and research findings, higher education increased its efforts to help faculty members create climates conducive to learning, to use a variety of instructional approaches to promote learning, and to shape the curriculum through educational objectives and student assessment. As they observed institutions moving through the 1990's, Gaff and Simpson (1994) reported increased efforts to support faculty in their teaching role; they cited the loss of public affection for higher education, the ever-changing nature of students, and the challenges presented by technology as the forces most responsible for this emphasis.

The demand for faculty members to respond to changes in society continues as the 21st century gets underway. In presenting current demographic shifts, Keller (2001) stated that "colleges and universities that were once camps for late adolescents have increasingly become institutions open to persons of many ages, from puberty to senility" (p. 234). He described how the aging population is producing a boom in adult education and innovative programs for the elderly; how massive immigration is leading to an emphasis on multiculturalism and a revision of general education requirements; and how changes in family structure are necessitating increased financial, academic, and psychological services for students.

Researchers are not the only ones noting changes in higher education; on a daily basis faculty experience the challenges that these demographic shifts bring to the classrooms. A recent faculty survey ("Attitudes and Activities of Full-time Faculty," 1998-99) indicated that 83% of the faculty members believed that promoting the intellectual development of students was a high priority at their institution, but only 42% were satisfied with the quality of their students. The majority of the faculty members surveyed considered it "essential" or "very important" to help their students develop the ability to think clearly (99%), prepare for employment after college (71%), enhance their self-understanding (62%), and develop both personal values (60%) and moral character (57%). Like faculty on many other campuses, however, experienced faculty at the University of Minnesota anecdotally report that achieving these goals is becoming increasingly difficult because once-effective teaching methods do not have the desired impact on the students who fill their lecture halls and seminars today.

Faculty developers throughout the United States are increasingly realizing the need to provide an opportunity for experienced faculty to address the teaching and learning issues confronting them. In the past, initiatives have primarily targeted the needs of graduate students and early career faculty (Austin, 2002; Boice, 1992). In fact,

experienced faculty have often partnered in these campus efforts to prepare graduate students and new faculty for the professorate. For instance, when Crawley (1995) examined findings from the *National Survey on Senior Faculty Renewal*, he found that a high percentage of the responding research universities provided opportunities for tenured faculty involvement in graduate teaching assistant training/orientation (91.3%) and opportunities to mentor junior faculty (81.3%). However, fewer than half of the universities provided networking or interest groups for faculty to discuss shared issues and concerns about teaching, and only 23% provided incentives or support to facilitate the return of graduate faculty or researchers to undergraduate teaching. Therefore, while tenured faculty frequently provided support to graduate students and colleagues new to the profession, these data suggest that there are far fewer opportunities for experienced faculty to support their own instructional needs and each other. Since the survey only assessed availability of services, it is unclear how frequently experienced faculty participated in teaching enrichment opportunities at their institutions.

Research suggests that the teaching vitality of experienced faculty is determined to a great extent by the teaching climate of the institution. LaCelle-Peterson and Finkelstein's (1993) eleven campus study of senior faculty members found that "the overwhelming majority enjoy teaching and care a great deal about student learning" (p. 25). However, these experienced faculty emphasized that their energy for teaching varied according to the nature of their teaching assignments and whether opportunities for collegial interaction about teaching were available. They emphasized that repetitive teaching assignments, lack of discussion about teaching at department meetings and the autonomy associated with their instructional role contributed to burnout. Analysis of their findings led LaCelle-Peterson and Finkelstein (1993) to conclude: "Teaching is isolated and poorer for that isolation. Without periodic opportunities to revitalize their professional lives generally and their teaching lives in particular, faculty members report that their 'teaching vitality' tends to slip" (p. 24-25).

There is no doubt that experienced faculty have always been welcome to participate in instructional development activities at their institutions. A study of ninety-four institutions indicated that the three most common elements of professional programming available to instructional staff include workshops, individual consultations, and resource centers (Hellyer & Boschmann, 1993). Yet targeting experienced faculty for specific programming has not been a priority. Many department chairs and college deans view experienced faculty as either individuals

who were (1) vital in their early years and will continue to be so or (2) deadwood who had stopped contributing to the institution the day they earned tenure. Well-intentioned campus administrators may have inadvertently perpetuated this dichotomy by directing limited faculty development resources primarily toward graduate students and new faculty. According to Mills (2000), many administrators believe that “habits created during the early years will last an academic lifetime” (p. 181). Such a choice ignores the fact that ensuring vitality throughout a career is more complex than simply choosing the right people and getting them off to a good start.

Swings in vitality can be addressed both by the individual and the institution. In research studies faculty members have reported that they get energy from students and performing well in the classroom (LaCelle-Peterson & Finkelstein, 1993). Yet the intrinsic rewards of teaching are clearly enhanced when institutions offer programs which provide faculty with a structured opportunity to join their colleagues and reflect on teaching (Bland & Bergquist, 1997; Cox, 2002; Jackson & Simpson, 1993; Kalivoda, Broder, & Jackson, 2003; Smith & Smith, 1993). For example, Miami (OH) University’s faculty learning communities represent one particularly comprehensive institutional model for bringing faculty members together. These communities, which can be cohort or topic based, provide an opportunity for eight to twelve faculty to explore teaching and learning issues through seminars and activities for a period of at least six months. Over one-third of the current faculty at Miami University have participated in this teaching enrichment project sponsored by the Ohio Board of Regents and the U.S. Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (“Developing Faculty Learning Communities,” 2003).

The possibility of participating in such institutional programs is especially important for mid-career faculty members, who still have years of professional activity and contributions ahead of them. Because there is evidence that many individuals at mid-career experience low morale, feel disengaged, and isolated (Bland & Bergquist, 1997; Boice, 1993; Karpiak, 1997; Lamber et al., 1993), it is imperative that institutions not leave the professional vitality of these experienced faculty to chance.

The Mid-Career Teaching Program

If vitality in teaching is a goal, we believe that connecting faculty with the resources and opportunities appropriate to their needs throughout

their careers is essential. In 1998 the Center for Teaching and Learning Services (CTLIS) at the University of Minnesota expanded its programming for experienced faculty to include a year-long initiative for faculty members who wanted to improve student learning through effective teaching. Rather than define “mid-career,” organizers of the program decided to offer an opportunity for post-tenured faculty to meet together to discuss teaching and learning issues in depth, to refine their professional identities to fit their current goals and situations, and to adapt their teaching styles to meet the demands and expectations of today’s students. As a result, the Mid-Career Teaching Program (MCTP) attracted a group of experienced faculty who are quite diverse in age, in the number of years they have worked in higher education, and in the length of time remaining before retirement.

Assumptions Underlying the Mid-Career Teaching Program

In designing the MCTP, we made six assumptions. These assumptions are:

- Assumption 1.* Collegial interaction is important to faculty development.
- Assumption 2.* Facilitated discussions centered on teaching and learning play an important role in initiating change.
- Assumption 3.* Pedagogical change requires exposure to new ideas, an opportunity to reflect on the possibilities that these ideas offer, and encouragement to adapt the ideas to one’s own teaching situation.
- Assumption 4.* Experienced faculty may feel distanced from their students and newer instructional strategies.
- Assumption 5.* Faculty are interested in adapting their teaching style and course design to meet the expectations of today’s diverse students.
- Assumption 6.* Positive outcomes occur when a teaching enrichment program meets faculty where they are, respects their experience, and addresses faculty concerns.

Goals of the Mid-Career Teaching Program

Four MCTP goals emerge from these assumptions. We want to:

- introduce faculty to pedagogical strategies to improve student learning,

- support faculty as they apply new knowledge and techniques in their classrooms,
- provide faculty with an opportunity to converse with peers about improving student learning through effective teaching,
- offer a forum for faculty to discuss mid-life events that have an impact on their personal and professional lives.

The MCTP assumptions and goals clarify expectations for the program. Participating in MCTP provides faculty members with a chance to reflect on their classroom practices, participate in activities that challenge their thinking about teaching and learning, and support each other in using new teaching strategies. Whereas many traditional faculty development initiatives focus on teaching instructional skills, MCTP strives to provide an opportunity for faculty to partner with each other to improve student learning. MCTP facilitators feel that the Program is achieving its goals when faculty members report (1) an increased satisfaction with their teaching and the progress of their students, (2) a sense of community as they meet with peers and expand their understanding of teaching and learning, and (3) a clarification or renewal of their professional and personal goals.

Curriculum and Structure

MCTP participants form small multi-disciplinary groups that meet regularly throughout the academic year. Members of each group become familiar with each other's teaching contexts and work with each other to learn about and experiment with pedagogical best practices from current educational research.

The MCTP curriculum reflects interests expressed by the participants, themes discussed in literature on mid-career faculty, and suggestions offered by past MCTP participants. (See Appendix for a sample of MCTP curriculum topics.) Co-facilitators provide a list of topics, then invite participants at the first group meeting to refine the topics to meet their needs and interests. Group members may choose to add new topics, sequence suggested topics differently, or combine two or more topics into one session. In addition, participants may volunteer to partner with co-facilitators to plan and facilitate a session on a topic of professional interest or expertise.

MCTP faculty groups consist of 6–15 faculty members from a variety of disciplines who make a commitment to participate in MCTP for the entire academic year. Groups form early fall semester, and meet

for 12 two-hour sessions (six sessions per semester) throughout the academic year. Each group identifies and discusses group guidelines, including procedures for missed meetings and the confidentiality of information disclosed at meetings. In subsequent sessions, group members revisit these guidelines as needed.

Between group sessions, MCTP encourages participants to continue conversations through email and electronic bulletin board discussions. Faculty may also consult individually with a group co-facilitator or with other members of the group about instructional issues or a topic they want to pursue in more depth.

Co-Facilitators

MCTP groups are co-facilitated by CTLS staff members and experienced faculty. When possible, each facilitation team consists of a male and a female in order to reflect the gender distribution of each group. CTLS uses nominations from CTLS staff and prior MCTP facilitators and participants to select faculty co-facilitators.

MCTP co-facilitators are committed to improved student learning, innovative instruction, and peer discussion of teaching and learning issues; they understand group dynamics and possess the skills necessary to guide their peers in a discussion of effective teaching. During the co-facilitation process the faculty member and CTLS instructional specialist work together to model instructional techniques and to provide a balance between educational theory and classroom practice.

In addition to planning and facilitating each MCTP group session, co-facilitators from all MCTP groups meet together at least three times. The first meeting occurs early in the fall semester, and the remaining two are scheduled towards the end of fall and spring semesters. The purpose of the first meeting is to provide an overview of the program and to give each team of co-facilitators the opportunity to discuss their facilitation styles and responsibilities. Subsequent meetings focus on group updates, effective activities and resources, and program evaluation procedures. It is expected that each team of co-facilitators will share equally in the design and implementation of their group, meeting prior to each MCTP group session to determine format and resources. At the end of the year co-facilitators review the effectiveness of assigned readings and recommend programmatic changes to the Director of CTLS. In an effort to honor faculty co-facilitators for their contributions to the MCTP, the CTLS provides each faculty co-facilitator a professional development stipend.

While the overall MCTP design is standard across all groups, co-facilitators may adjust group content, structure, and activities to reflect their group's interests and needs as well as their own unique perspectives and personalities. For example, one co-facilitation team may begin each session with a "check-in" for participants to briefly describe both successes and frustrations related to teaching since the last meeting. Another co-facilitation team may invite participants to comment on the assigned readings at the beginning of the session. Other co-facilitators might ask the faculty group members to update the group on their progress with their individual MCTP goals.

Co-facilitators engage the knowledge, experience, and creativity of group members; and they model active and cooperative learning strategies. They provide content through various instructional formats, including readings, guest speakers, and multimedia presentations. Co-facilitators keep discussions focused; and they demonstrate teaching techniques that require introspection, critical thinking, competitive play, group interaction, and experiential role-playing. Co-facilitators help participants identify parts of their teaching that are effective as well as parts which may require realignment.

Faculty Recruitment

The CTLS promotes MCTP as a program to enrich the teaching experience of faculty at mid-career. Mid-career is not specifically defined by age or length of time teaching, but CTLS focuses recruitment efforts on associate and full professors. Faculty members choose to participate in MCTP for various reasons. The program may attract those who are deeply committed to teaching and are good at it, yet they want to be part of a community which discusses teaching and learning on a regular basis. Other faculty may want to participate in MCTP to revitalize themselves and their instructional skills. MCTP may also attract faculty who are disappointed with their student course evaluations or who have experienced a decrease in their classroom confidence and satisfaction. At times, a departmental colleague or collegiate administrator recommends the program to a faculty member.

Recruitment of MCTP participants begins in spring semester prior to the next academic year. CTLS publicizes MCTP via email to all associate and full professors on campus. In addition, all Deans and Department Chairs receive an email message describing the Mid-Career Teaching Program; the email encourages administrators to forward the

announcement to their faculty and recommend the program to them. Other recruiting strategies include MCTP announcements in campus newsletters, at selected campus meetings, and at CTLS Teaching Enrichment workshops. MCTP co-facilitators also encourage current participants to discuss the program with campus colleagues and invite them to join.

Regular Program Evaluation

Participants complete a feedback questionnaire at mid-year and at the end of the program. These measures not only provide evaluative information to co-facilitators, but also model sound instructional practice for faculty in their own classes. At mid-year the feedback helps group facilitators gauge the appropriateness of the programming for their particular group of participants. At the end of the year the collective information from all groups is used to modify MCTP as needed.

Participant Recognition

At the end of the year MCTP participants are honored in several ways. First, the co-facilitators of each Mid-Career group send a congratulatory letter highlighting the faculty member's involvement in the program to each participant's Department Chair and/or Dean and include a copy of the MCTP syllabus. In addition, participants receive a letter of recognition from the Provost (which is also copied to the Department Chair and Dean). These letters acknowledge the faculty member's participation in the program and applaud the person's commitment to teaching.

CTLS recognizes MCTP participants with a reception at the University President's residence. This event, which is called "The Celebration of Teaching," acknowledges each faculty member's commitment to effective teaching and learning. Various campus stakeholders address the participants, including central administrators, the CTLS Director, MCTP facilitators, and selected MCTP participants. After the formal ceremony, MCTP participants receive a certificate and a gift of appreciation for their commitment to improving instruction on campus.

During the first two years of the program, MCTP participants also received a small faculty development stipend. Since then, this practice has varied. In some years budget constraints have made it difficult to offer stipends, while a few college deans have expressed uneasiness

about appearing to “pay” faculty for their participation in professional development activities.

Formal Evaluation of MCTP

During the 2001–2002 academic year we conducted a formal evaluation of MCTP to assess the outcomes and impact of the program on faculty instruction. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed as described below.

Procedures

We invited all participants ($N = 60$) in MCTP from winter and spring terms 1998, when it was first offered, through the 2000–2001 academic year to complete a survey questionnaire about the program. We contacted each participant a maximum of four times. First, the administrators of the program mailed a survey questionnaire along with a letter to each participant’s campus address. The letter described the purposes of the questionnaire and encouraged participants to complete the survey. To insure confidentiality of responses, participants’ did not write their names on the questionnaire. However, we put an identification number on each questionnaire so that we could follow up with non-respondents; only the graduate research assistant (second author), who had no previous contact with MCTP, had access to the list matching names and identification numbers. Second, two weeks after the initial mailing of the questionnaire the non-respondents received a follow-up postcard. Third, in another two weeks, non-respondents received an email message encouraging them to complete the questionnaire. A fourth and final contact was made by telephone to non-respondents two weeks after the third contact and six weeks after the initial mailing of the questionnaire. These procedures yielded a return of 37 questionnaires or 65% of the deliverable questionnaires (three questionnaires were returned because the person was no longer at the university). Most MCTP participants returned the completed questionnaires ($n = 22$) after the first mailing, while others returned them after each follow-up reminder (i.e. 4, 7, and 4 respectively) period.

We asked faculty at the end of the survey if they would be willing to let the graduate research assistant interview them about their participation in MCTP. Twenty-one faculty answered “yes,” and the assistant interviewed nine of these individuals. Interviewees represented

different disciplines, genders, and ages. The purpose of the interviews was to deepen our understanding of faculty perceptions and attitudes about MCTP, and the interviews lasted from 30 to 60 minutes. The research assistant asked interviewees five questions:

1. What impact, if any, has your participation in the Mid-Career Teaching Program had on your teaching practice and/or your other responsibilities at the University?
2. What might you say to a colleague who was thinking about registering for the program?
3. What type of person is a particularly good fit for the program?
4. What suggestions do you have for strengthening the MCTP? What topics were particularly useful or not useful? Are there other topics you might have liked the program to include?
5. Any other comments you might have about the program? For example, has the program had any effect on your colleagues or department? Any suggestions on how best to market the program?

The interviewer took notes during the interviews and these data were then collated and categorized from the notes. The interview data in this study were used to enrich the discussion and conclusions of the survey data.

The project, evaluation instruments, and procedures had been approved by the University's Institutional Review Board.

Survey Questionnaire

We developed the Mid-Career Teaching Program Questionnaire specifically to evaluate the MCTP. With the assistance of current and former program facilitators and administrators of MCTP, we drafted and reviewed several versions of a questionnaire. The final questionnaire consisted of six sections of both likert (25 items) and open response questions (11 questions). Section 1 asked the participant for demographic information (e.g. gender, age, years of teaching, academic rank, and home college), when the person participated in MCTP, and an open response question about the person's motivation for enrolling in MCTP. Sections 2–4 asked how the MCTP changed the participant's (a) personal attitudes about teaching, (b) teaching behaviors, and (c) teaching knowledge. Section 5 items queried the respondents on the impact of MCTP on their department colleagues, college, and personal life. Section 6 consisted of two open questions: (1) What was most useful about MCTP? (2) What was least useful about MCTP? At the end of

each Section 2–5, two open response questions asked respondents to “please explain responses” (to the likert items) and “in what other way(s) have you changed” (as it relates to that section). Thus, we invited respondents to add their own unique perspectives for each section of the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The frequency and percentage of each likert item were calculated. We categorized the open response qualitative items using the following procedures and stages. At stage 1, Researcher A (first author) coded each qualitative response into a category descriptive of that response. Some respondents made more than one comment for each question, and these were coded as separate responses. At stage 2, Researcher A reviewed initial coding categories and revised some categories on a second review. In this stage some categories were collapsed to reduce the overall number of categories for each question response that had previously been coded in categories of “other” or “not relevant” became either its own category or was added to an existing category. As a validity check, Researcher B (second author) independently reviewed all comments and assigned them to one or more of the stage 2 categories. As a final step, the two researchers met to review the placement of comments into categories. A percentage of agreement between the researchers was calculated for the placement of responses into categories for each question. The percentage was based on the number of agreements of Researcher B with Researcher A. If at least part of a comment was coded similarly, the comment was considered to be an agreement. The two researchers discussed disagreements and came to a consensus about the appropriate category placement. The researchers’ percentage of agreement on coding comments into categories ranged from 100% to 70% with a mean percentage of agreement of 92% on all 11 open response questions.

Survey Results

Demographic information about the 37 respondents is reported in Table I. More males than females responded, and all were over 40 years of age. The most common academic rank was full professor (62%). Although participants had a mean of 22 years of teaching experience in higher education, the number of years ranged from 3–47 years. [The median number was also 22 years, and the standard deviation was 10.37.] The participants’ academic homes varied, representing liberal

Table I
Demographics

	N	%
Age		
41–50	15	41
51–60	17	46
Over 60	5	14
Sex		
Male	21	57
Female	16	43
Academic Rank		
Professor	23	62
Associate Professor	7	19
Assistant Professor	4	11
Other	3	8
College		
Liberal Arts/Education	6	16
Health Sciences/Veterinary Medicine	15	41
Agriculture/Natural Resources	6	16
Engineering/Technology/Biological Sciences	5	14
Other	5	14

Note. Total $N = 37$.

arts, health sciences, engineering, education, and agriculture. When asked in an open response item what motivated them to participate in MCTP, 41 responses were coded into 7 categories (95% agreement on coding by researchers). The majority (57%) wrote that they wanted to develop teaching skills and improve their teaching effectiveness. For example, some faculty expressed very specific goals such as wanting to learn better ways to teach large classes or wanting to become more skilled with teaching undergraduates after many years of teaching graduate students. Most faculty, however, expressed more general goals, such as “broadening my perspectives on effective classroom pedagogy” or “enhancing my teaching effectiveness.” One respondent wrote, “I wanted to get new ideas and improve my teaching.” Other reasons for participating included a desire to interact with other faculty (12%), recommended by others (10%), interest in rejuvenating teaching (7%), student teaching evaluations (7%), and self-motivation (7%).

Personal Attitudes

Eight likert questions asked about participants’ change in attitudes toward teaching since their participation in MCTP. On a scale of

5 = increased to 1 = decreased, the mean score on each item of satisfaction, confidence, motivation, and enthusiasm was 4.0 and higher. Over 90% of the respondents indicated an increase in satisfaction as a classroom instructor. Table II reports the complete results.

The open response question of “explain responses” yielded 15 comments that were coded into 4 categories. The two researchers had 93% agreement on the coding of responses into these categories. The categories and number of comments in each were: (a) reflections on the teaching process ($n = 6$). As one wrote, “Too much of the teaching process is now grounded in getting good evaluations;” and another “I have always been motivated to teach.” (b) developed new teaching methods ($n = 4$). One participant wrote: “The program provided many new ideas for teaching methods that I have used.” The third and fourth categories of responses commented on (c) increased motivation and confidence ($n = 3$), and (d) opportunity to share ideas with other faculty ($n = 2$). The latter was exemplified by the comment, “Good to hear others having similar issues with students and their attitudes about school.”

The second open response question in this section asked, “In what other ways have your attitude(s) toward teaching changed?” We received a total of 19 written responses, and these were coded into 5 categories (95% agreement). The most common responses pertained to improving teaching skills, acquiring new ideas, and achieving greater understanding of learning styles ($n = 12$). Other categories of comments pertained to contact with other faculty ($n = 2$) and perceptions of student motivation and interest ($n = 2$). For example one respondent wrote, “I don’t let those students not interested in learning bother me.” Two faculty experienced changes in personal perceptions; for instance, one individual stated “I am much more detached about where I am coming from.” One person reported that his/her motivation increased “I’ve been invigorated. I proposed a new . . . seminar.”

Teaching Behaviors

Eight likert questions on a scale from 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree assessed the change in teaching behaviors section of the survey. Table III shows the frequency and percentage for each item. The most prevalent change in teaching behaviors was an increase in the amount of in-class interaction with students and changes in course syllabus. Over 80% reported changes in these two instructional behaviors. Faculty reported fewer changes in their grading systems and their use

Table II
Change in Personal Attitudes

Question: How has each of the following changed since your participation in the MCTP?	Increased (5)		Increased somewhat (4)		Remained the same (3)		Decreased somewhat (2)		Decreased (1)		M	SD
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
My satisfaction as a classroom instructor.	12	32	22	60	2	5	1	3	0	0	4.22	.67
My confidence as a classroom instructor.	11	30	18	49	7	19	1	3	0	0	4.05	.78
My motivation as a classroom instructor.	17	46	15	41	5	14	0	0	0	0	4.32	.71
My enthusiasm as a classroom instructor.	17	46	14	38	6	16	0	0	0	0	4.30	.74

Note. Total N = 37.

Table III
Change in Teaching Behaviors

Question: Since I participated in the MCTP, I have . . .	Strongly agree (5)		Agree (4)		Neutral (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly disagree (1)		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%		
Expanded my use of technology in teaching.	6	16	13	35	12	32	4	11	2	5	3.46	1.07
Utilized student feedback better.	6	16	19	51	12	32	0	0	0	0	3.84	.69
Increased my in-class interaction with students.	8	22	22	60	7	19	0	0	0	0	4.03	.64
Made useful changes in my course syllabus.	9	24	22	60	5	14	0	0	1	3	4.03	.80
Revised my student grading system.	4	11	6	16	24	65	2	5	1	3	3.27	.84
Assessed student learning better.	4	11	18	49	13	35	2	5	0	0	3.65	.75
Received more favorable student evaluations.	6	16	12	32	14	38	5	14	0	0	3.51	.93

Note. Total *N* = 37.

of technology in teaching. Collectively, the eight items yielded a mean score of 3.27 or higher (3 = neutral response).

The first open response question, which asked faculty to explain any response to the likert items, yielded eight comments assigned to six categories. The two researchers had 100% agreement on the coding of responses into the categories. The categories were: (a) increase in confidence and motivation ($n = 2$); for example, one faculty member wrote: "I felt more confident (and willing) to develop a web version of a course." One faculty member each commented on (b) an improved response to students, (c) a reinforcement of teaching style, and (d) a desire to be more positive about technology. One participant noted that he/she was (e) selected by students to receive a teaching award. Two faculty members wrote that they experienced (f) no major changes.

The second open response question about "other ways that your teaching behaviors changed" yielded 24 responses assigned to six categories (96% agreement of researchers on the category coding). The most common response written by 11 respondents was that they now use different techniques in teaching (category 1). One wrote, "I think about the best way to cover material," and another wrote "I use more variety in my learning activities." One person began to use PowerPoint and WebCT as instructional technology tools to enhance coursework. Another faculty member described making greater use of critical thinking questions in classes. Less frequent categories (categories 2–4) with three responses each were a greater acceptance of students and student feedback, improved student assessments, and a gain in confidence and openness to change. Examples of written comments include: "I make better use of student feedback at mid-semester" and "I got more comfortable with where I am and how I teach grad students." The final two categories (categories 5–6) with two responses each were about discussing their teaching with other colleagues and working better with graduate students. One commented, "I share many of the tips I learned with my colleagues," and another wrote, "I was feeling isolated about teaching and needed to talk about it." Finally, one noted "I am a better mentor to my graduate TA's."

Teaching Knowledge

We asked participants to complete nine likert questions about changes in their teaching knowledge, with responses ranging from 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree (Table IV). Faculty agreed most

Table IV
Change in Teaching Knowledge

Question: Since I participated in the MCTP, I am more knowledgeable about...	Strongly agree (5)		Agree (4)		Neutral (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly disagree (1)		M	SD
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Interactive teaching techniques.	9	24	24	65	4	11	0	0	0	0	4.14	.59
Cooperative learning strategies.	9	24	22	60	5	14	1	3	0	0	4.05	.70
Lesson design.	4	11	17	46	15	41	1	3	0	0	3.65	.72
Student learning styles.	9	24	24	65	4	11	0	0	0	0	4.14	.59
Student characteristics/expectations.	6	16	20	54	11	30	0	0	0	0	3.86	.67
Teaching technologies.	7	19	20	54	9	24	1	3	0	0	3.89	.74
Utilizing student feedback.	6	16	21	57	10	27	0	0	0	0	3.89	.66
Alternative student assessment strategies.	4	11	18	49	12	32	3	8	0	0	3.62	.79
Teaching critical thinking skills.	5	14	17	46	11	30	3	8	1	3	3.59	.93

Note. Total N = 37.

strongly with having more teaching knowledge about student learning styles, interactive teaching techniques, and cooperative learning strategies (all with means above 4.00). Lower means, but above 3.59, were teaching critical thinking skills, using alternative student assessment strategies, and designing lesson plans.

A total of 10 written comments explained responses, and these were coded into four categories (70% agreement). The most common written response related to the MCTP readings, discussions, and training ($n = 4$). One wrote: "I had never had any formal training in teaching... I was very grateful for the opportunity." Three comments were related to the sessions on active and collaborative learning. Two participants indicated that they did not learn much that was new, as one wrote, "I was already doing a lot of this." One commented, "I am more careful in how I structure early classes and a course."

Other ways that faculty changed in teaching knowledge yielded five categories based on eight responses (88% agreement). These written comments included a greater awareness of student needs ($n = 3$). For example, a respondent noted an "increased willingness to have students construct their own knowledge based on what is relevant to them."

Impact

Table V reports the impact of MCTP on faculty colleagues and personal life. We asked five questions, giving participants response options of "positive," "neutral," "negative," and "not sure." Generally, the impact of MCTP was either positive or neutral. Participants most frequently indicated a positive impact on personal life (73%). They reported that

Table V
Impact of MCTP

Question: What do you believe was the impact of your participation in the MCTP on your...	Positive		Neutral		Negative		Not sure	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
	Department/program colleagues?	15	41	16	43	2	5	4
Department/program administrators?	12	32	17	46	1	3	7	19
College/school faculty?	9	24	20	54	2	5	6	16
College/school administrators?	9	24	20	54	1	3	7	19
Personal life?	27	73	5	14	2	5	3	8

Note. Total $N = 37$.

MCTP had increased their teaching skills and confidence and reduced their stress. Five of the nine faculty interviewed about the program also credited MCTP with increasing their personal satisfaction with teaching and reducing their stress. Some faculty members stated that they experienced less frustration with their faculty positions and felt renewed energy and enthusiasm. While no one specifically discussed the direct impact of MCTP on their lives outside of the academy, faculty comments suggested that their increased sense of competence and reduced levels of frustration and stress did effect their personal lives. As one person put it, "When I feel better about my teaching, I feel better about myself and there is less spillover into my personal life."

Table V shows a few people indicating "negative" ($n = 4$) and "not sure" ($n = 11$) as they assessed the impact of MCTP, but it is unclear what these data mean since the responders did not explain their responses. In addition, these faculty members were either positive or neutral about the program in other parts of the survey. One individual did indicate that MCTP could be shorter, more focused, and perhaps integrated with other teaching enrichment programs. Another person commented that it was too soon to assess the impact.

Fifteen written comments to explain the responses charted in Table V were coded into three categories (100% agreement). The most common responses highlighted the lack of recognition and interest in teaching by departments and the university ($n = 9$). As faculty considered the impact of their involvement in MCTP on their departments and the college, one wrote, "research oriented department and school, other faculty aren't bothered one way or another by my teaching." Another wrote, "General attitude here is that funded research is all that is important." The second category of increased personal satisfaction yielded four comments such as "I didn't get any rewards or recognition from my department or college, but I felt better personally." The third category included two comments related to an increase in collegial interactions.

Written comments about other ways MCTP had an impact on participants yielded 12 responses and six categories (82% agreement). Three comments noted an increase in confidence and less stress. Other categories and comments noted that MCTP promoted thinking and learning about teaching, interaction with other faculty, development of a new course and programs, and greater awareness of student reactions and needs. For example, one faculty member wrote that he/she "became more aware of student reactions. . . more patient, more willing to help."

Most Useful About MCTP

An open response question asked faculty to write what was most useful about MCTP. We coded fifty responses into four categories (91% researcher agreement). The four categories were: (1) Readings, discussions, and teaching techniques ($n = 22$). Participants commented that they found it useful to “consider other teaching methods—to take a chance on something new.” Others suggested that “the numerous ideas for improving my teaching effectiveness” were useful. (2) Dialogue with other faculty ($n = 19$). In this category, participants commented that they found very useful “what I learned from other faculty in the program” as well as “the forum for discussion about teaching with other faculty throughout the university.” (3) MCTP group facilitators ($n = 8$). In this category, participants highlighted that the “facilitators were great role models.” (4) An increased awareness of students. One person noted that MCTP was most useful because it helped with “getting a better idea about what the students wanted.”

Least Useful About MCTP

This final survey question, “what was least useful about the MCTP” yielded 29 comments that were grouped into nine categories (97% agreement): (1) Nothing or not sure ($n = 10$). About one-third of the faculty indicated that they had nothing specific to say about what they found least useful about MCTP. (2) Domination of meetings by certain participants and/or resistant attitudes of certain participants ($n = 4$). (3) Lack of focus during the sessions ($n = 4$). For example, one faculty member wrote “The program needs to have . . . more focused meeting sessions.” (4) Specific MCTP sessions not being useful ($n = 3$). (5) Dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the program ($n = 4$). One person disliked the travel time to attend MCTP meetings, while another said he/she was “dissatisfied with the program regarding the effectiveness of the way it was conducted and the amount of time it took.” Another indicated the desire to have more teaching materials. (6) Readings. Two people were dissatisfied with at least some of the readings. (7) Too little information on a particular topic. Two faculty members wrote that there was not enough about teaching evaluations and student assessments.

Conclusions

Mid-career faculty can be an overlooked group on college and university campuses, especially in the domain of classroom instruction. A

program such as MCTP is one way to address the needs of mid-career faculty to better serve an increasingly diverse student population. Since its inception, MCTP has provided experienced faculty opportunities to enrich their pedagogy through focused dialogue with peers and structured learning about new instructional strategies. Faculty participants were overwhelmingly positive about the program, with a large majority indicating that their satisfaction, confidence, motivation, and enthusiasm for classroom instruction increased after participation in the program. The faculty increased their knowledge about the instructional process and made positive changes to their teaching behaviors. The faculty indicated that the program had a greater impact on their individual situations than it did on their interactions with their colleagues and department.

Our experience with MCTP has yielded several insights and conclusions, which we hope may be useful to other institutions interested in launching a similar program. Our major findings are as follows.

1. *Mid-career faculty will participate in and benefit from a program to enrich their classroom instruction.* The majority of faculty who completed our evaluation survey were between 41 and 60 years of age and an associate or full professor. They represented an average of 22 years of teaching in higher education. Contrary to the notion that only early career faculty will be interested in focusing on teaching, experienced faculty at the University of Minnesota reported that they benefited from discussions about teaching and learning in MCTP and that the program had a positive influence on them. Survey and interview data revealed that these faculty members valued the opportunity to talk with each other; and they felt that they learned new teaching techniques, improved their teaching style, and increased their confidence in the classroom.
2. *Program curriculum must reflect the interests and needs of the faculty.* It is important that faculty participants have opportunities to influence the content as well as the process of discussion in these groups. Faculty members bring many years of teaching experience to a program such as the MCTP, and they have much to offer each other. Program facilitators must capitalize on faculty experience and expertise.
3. *Mid-career is best defined by self-selection of participants.* Experienced faculty members vary in how they choose to define mid-career. Some define mid-career by age, while others use years of employment or years in higher education as their benchmark. Serving as a faculty member is a first career for some individuals, while for others it is a second or third career. Some earned

their doctorates at a fairly young age, while others pursued these degrees after raising children or after working in another area. Given this range of possibilities, we feel it is important to let faculty self-select the program. Programmers then need to be ready to meet participants where they are and help them achieve their goals.

Our experience also suggests that program developers may want to consider separate programming for faculty members within five years of retirement. Such faculty may be more interested in activities that help them leave a teaching legacy, prepare for retirement, or make a smooth transition into the world beyond the collegiate community. Proximity to retirement, rather than a specific age, appears to determine interest in particular discussion topics.

4. *A program for experienced faculty must be attractive to both good teachers and those who need improvement.* A program that hopes to enhance the community of teaching and learning on campus must meet the needs of faculty who already are doing an excellent job of teaching but who wish to become better as well as those who recognize a need to revitalize their pedagogy. When asked what type of faculty person is a particularly good fit for the program, most interviewees indicated faculty who are interested in teaching and open to new possibilities. Regardless of their initial motivation, faculty must be willing to examine their own instructional practices and be open to change. A mix of faculty with varied instructional skills and enthusiasm for the teaching role strengthens the dialogue about teaching and learning. This mixture also encourages faculty to serve as models for each other.
5. *Institutional culture must promote and value exemplary teaching.* The intrinsic motivation to change, while important, may not be sufficient to sustain a teaching enrichment program for mid-career faculty members. Especially in research universities, where there is an emphasis on scholarly research production, faculty members may not be willing to give the time to participate in such a program. If quality teaching is not explicitly expected and rewarded as an institutional priority, faculty may feel that participation in a program to strengthen teaching and improve student learning is not highly valued by administrators compared to other activities. Therefore, administrators may need to provide some form of external motivation for faculty participation. Possibilities might include offering professional development funds for

participation or relieving participants from other department or college assignments. For instance, a recent survey of faculty members who expressed interest in MCTP but ultimately did not participate indicated that newly assigned departmental responsibilities prevented them from having the time to do so. At the very least, administrators must acknowledge the faculty member's participation and find ways to reward that involvement. Unfortunately, for some faculty their experience may be similar to that expressed by one of the participants: "They don't give a rat's ass about teaching" (commenting about the administration). Whether this type of sentiment is accurate or not, the challenge for administrators who wish to improve campus instruction and dispel faculty cynicism is to find ways to reward and recognize faculty participation in teaching enrichment programs.

6. *Faculty value opportunities to talk about teaching with colleagues.* Classroom teaching is often a lonely activity with few opportunities for faculty to communicate about effective instruction. In many higher education settings faculty come together to talk about research, administrative matters, and course curricula, but rarely about teaching and learning. Faculty members value the opportunity to discuss their instructional successes and challenges. In this study, faculty reported that they felt enriched by meeting with a group of colleagues to focus on ways to strengthen their pedagogical knowledge and skills. They indicated that they felt energized by this faculty development initiative because it encouraged them to reflect on both professional and personal challenges and to support each other in times of change.
7. *Program procedures (e. g. structure, costs, and marketing) will vary across institutions.* Institutions can individualize teaching enrichment programs for experienced faculty according to the needs of their particular academic culture and climate. Program structures can vary according to program goals. What seems to be most important at the University of Minnesota is to provide mid-career faculty with an opportunity to engage in focused conversation with each other over a period of time. Faculty members want time to share their expertise as well as to offer support to their colleagues; they do not want to be passive participants in a large group meeting or in a workshop on "how to teach." A year-long commitment, with regular small group meetings, gives faculty members a chance to learn about each other, develop trust, and refine classroom practice skills. Some institutions may prefer fewer, but

longer meetings, over one semester rather than two. Scheduled group meetings can also be supplemented by individual sessions between faculty and an instructional specialist.

While the specific costs for such programming will vary, the CTLS budget funds stipends for faculty co-facilitators, refreshments for the meetings, and materials (including copyright costs). Because many faculty tell us that a small professional development stipend is a positive way to recognize their commitment to teaching, we recommend offering such a stipend if possible.

The best recruiters for such a program are faculty members who have completed it and who are willing to share their enthusiasm with their department and college colleagues. In addition, it is critical that college deans and department chairs find ways to show their active support for the teaching enrichment of faculty. If excellence in teaching is important to the institution, faculty members expect administrators to encourage and honor their participation. One specific time that administrators can articulate their support for such programming is during the faculty performance review process; this annual process provides an opportunity for department chairs and faculty to balance priorities so that teaching enrichment activities can be included in the workload for the next year.

Summary

We have presented an innovative program to enrich the collegiality and teaching effectiveness of mid-career faculty. This program, which has been successful and well received on the University of Minnesota campus, can easily be adapted to other campuses. While the design and procedures of similar programs may vary, it is critical that institutions give experienced faculty an opportunity to work together and support each other as they work to address today's instructional challenges. Experienced faculty want to continue to develop their expertise as educators, and they want administrators to value their commitment to doing so.

Appendix: Sample Mid-Career Teaching Program Topics

- I Student Population: Characteristics and Learning Needs
- II Educational Paradigms: From Teaching to Learning
- III Inclusive Course Syllabus: Design and Detail

- IV Styles of Learning: Influence on Instruction
- V Active and Cooperative Learning: Students as Participants
- VI Student Grades and Assessments: Measuring Student Learning
- VII Student Feedback to Improve Teaching: Course Evaluations
- VIII Critical Thinking: Skills for Life Long Learning
- IX Technology in Teaching: Enhancing Instruction and Learning
- X Faculty at Mid Career: Professional and Personal Themes
- XI Open Dialogue: Topics of Mutual Interest
- XII Course Closure: Issues and Strategies

Note. Additional MCTP information can be found on the program's website: <http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/faculty/midcar.html>

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