

What is the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT)?

Virtually all Tier 1 universities as well as most others at all levels have teaching and learning centers. What do these centers do exactly? A quote from the professional association of those who are specialists in this area of faculty development, POD, summarizes the answer to this question:

Teaching centers occupy a unique place in the structure of an institution because of their mandate to address the needs and interests of the entire academic community in support of the education of students. An effective teaching center plays a key role in creating a campus culture that values and rewards teaching. It takes a systems approach to being a change agent and provides synergy to campus support activities. It provides an overview of campus activities in order to highlight and disseminate instructional innovations and prioritize areas where more support is needed. It offers a guarantee of confidentiality to individual instructors so they view it as supportive, not evaluative. It has the institutional memory to provide continuity in teaching support services as department chairs, deans and provosts come and go. It makes the reward structure more responsive to teaching, for example by consulting on development of teaching evaluation processes and criteria for judging teaching excellence. It is entrepreneurial and coordinates campus involvement in local student learning projects, as well as those offered by foundations, associations, and federal agencies.
(from <http://www.podnetwork.org/development/value.htm>)

CELT has grown out of the confluence of programs and initiatives, including SACS. For example, CELT will be responsible for the New TA Orientation and the New Faculty Orientation. CELT has already met with and will be working with the campus-wide Teaching Effectiveness Committee. A&H's SOTL program is the kind of program CELT would like to sponsor in other schools around campus.

CELT's mission is:

to serve as catalyst for promoting the role of teaching excellence in a research university. CELT promotes the perspective that research, learning, and teaching are symbiotic and reciprocal processes sharing common characteristics such as value for discovering knowledge, communities of practice, and continuous evaluation and improvement.

What Does CELT Do at UTD?

CELT works with individual faculty clients (including teaching assistants) as requested to improve their teaching by:

- ✓ Meeting with faculty members regularly before class to discuss their plans for each class session.
- ✓ Attending class and provide feedback (formally on a form or informally via an interview-type conversation).
- ✓ Holding focus groups with students and provide their feedback to faculty.
- ✓ Assisting faculty members with mid-semester feedback instruments for during-semester adjustments.
- ✓ Videotaping and providing feedback.
- ✓ Developing any other methods that will help faculty be more effective teachers.
- ✓ Helping faculty members with testing and grading functions and issues.
- ✓ Helping faculty members interpret teaching evaluations.
- ✓ Helping faculty members use teaching evaluations as improvement tools.

CELT sponsors workshops, symposia, and brown bags over topics of interest to the UTD community on topics dealing with teaching.

CELT sponsors orientations for New Faculty and New Teaching Assistants.

CELT helps develop and train faculty and program heads in assessment methods for programs and courses.

CELT consults with faculty members and works with them on in-class research aimed at improving students' learning.

CELT will support UTD's QEP by offering research design expertise, literature review assistance, data collection assistance, and other assistance as requested.

Who is Involved With CELT?

Dr. JoyLynn Reed, Ph.D. is CELT's director. Dr. Reed has been engaged in faculty development, university curriculum development, and program development and assessment since 1990 at both the University of Texas at Austin and St. Edward's University. She have been at UTD since 2001 working both in the Office of Graduate Studies and in the Provost's Office. Her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology, her background in research methods/statistics, and her publications in the areas of learning, cognition, and motivation make her uniquely suited to direct a faculty development center at a research university.