Kalamazoo College Teaching Commons

Mission
The Kalamazoo College Teaching Commons fosters excellent teaching and significant learning that together support the mission of Kalamazoo College. The Teaching Commons is a physical and virtual place of possibility dedicated to exploration, collaboration, conversation, reflection, innovation, consultation, rejuvenation, commiseration, inspiration, and experimentation. The Teaching Commons is also a safe space for educators to discuss in confidence their teaching and intended student learning outcomes, knowing that issues or situations disclosed will not become part of faculty personnel reviews.

Vision – Ideas for Implementing the Kalamazoo College Teaching Commons Mission
Frequently at places like K, each faculty member is “the one...” – the one art historian, the one geneticist, the one Victorian literature scholar, or the one political theorist – and the energizing and enlightening conversations that occur in these disciplinary areas frequently need to happen with colleagues at other institutions. And yet, all educators at places like K are surrounded by colleagues focused on teaching and learning. The Kalamazoo College Teaching Commons will serve as a hub for conversations about teaching and learning with colleagues on our own campus. As such, the Teaching Commons will deliberately catalyze interdisciplinary interactions by connecting colleagues in our common endeavor of fostering student learning.

The Coordinator of Educational Effectiveness will serve as the Teaching Commons Coordinator. And, the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) will serve as the advisory board for, and active participant in, the Teaching Commons. As such, members of TLC would ideally have areas of interest that can help the Teaching Commons Coordinator develop and sustain appropriate resources and programming for and with the faculty.

Faculty should regard the Teaching Commons as a place in which they can discuss matters in confidence. Though the Teaching Commons Coordinator will have access to all course evaluations, the Coordinator must not and will not be involved in any faculty personnel reviews. Rather, access to course evaluations will be for the purpose of summarizing results of those evaluations each academic term, which are shared with all faculty, so that conversations with faculty about their own course evaluations can be contextualized. Maintaining confidentiality is paramount so that faculty can engage in candid dialogues with the Teaching Commons Coordinator. For this reason, the Teaching Commons Coordinator must be a faculty member and understood by everyone as being separate from the Provost Office and from the Faculty Personnel Committee.

The Kalamazoo College Teaching Commons will be the site of the annual Teaching and Learning Workshop, which serves to introduce new Kalamazoo College faculty to the teaching and learning ethos and atmosphere of K. The Teaching and Learning Workshop also establishes the mentoring program for new K faculty, and the Teaching Commons will support the very helpful relationships established during the workshop.

The Teaching Commons will encourage all K faculty, both new to the College and veterans, to continue exploring effective, intentional, and purposeful pedagogies, including those enhanced by technology. Reflecting on why we teach the way we do, whether our methods match our learning goals, and how our pedagogies align with students’ learning styles and ways of knowing is central to that exploration. And, because understanding effects of teaching approaches and learning environments are integral to the craft of educating students, assessment of all we do to enhance student learning will be woven into the fabric of the Kalamazoo Teaching Commons.

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