Kalamazoo College Teaching Commons
(Patrik Hultberg, Coordinator of Educational Effectiveness)

Report based on a SurveyMonkey questionnaire administered April, 2014. Faculty was asked to respond to 14 statements and answer two open ended questions.

STATEMENTS
(Questions have been sorted from highest average response to lowest.)

Q1. Coordinate ongoing conversations (e.g. brown bag discussions, collaborative pairings, faculty learning communities, or book clubs) about specific teaching issues and practices.
Avg: 4.04  (77.78% chose VERY USEFUL or ESSENTIAL)  n=54

Q2. Organize workshops on teaching and learning led by campus faculty or by visiting experts.
Avg: 4.04  (75.43% chose VERY USEFUL or ESSENTIAL)  n=54

Q3. Provide individual and confidential consulting about teaching, learning, and classroom issues.
Avg: 3.61  (61.11% chose VERY USEFUL or ESSENTIAL)  n=54

Q5. Coordinate consultations with a Kalamazoo College Instructional Technologist, who would introduce faculty to new technologies and/or help faculty learn how to use technologies effectively for enhancing teaching and learning.
Avg: 3.53  (58.49% chose VERY USEFUL or ESSENTIAL)  n=53

Q13. Maintain a library (online and books, journals, videos) of instructional development resources.
Avg: 3.40  (50.94% chose VERY USEFUL or ESSENTIAL)  n=53

Q10. Coordinate focus groups held with students about teaching and learning at K and report back to individuals and departments who requested student feedback.
Avg: 3.39  (53.70% chose VERY USEFUL or ESSENTIAL)  n=54

Q9. Provide individual consulting with faculty on designing and conducting evidence-based pedagogical scholarship (i.e. Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, SoTL).
Avg: 3.35  (48.15% chose VERY USEFUL or ESSENTIAL)  n=54

Q14. Serve as a clearinghouse and information source for external SoTL grants.
Avg: 3.31  (46.16% chose VERY USEFUL or ESSENTIAL)  n=52

Q7. Provide assistance and resources for department-level assessment of student learning outcomes.
Avg: 3.26  (40.75% chose VERY USEFUL or ESSENTIAL)  n=54
Q4. Provide in-class observation or videotaping of classroom teaching followed by feedback consultation.
Avg: 3.24  (42.59% chose VERY USEFUL or ESSENTIAL)  n=54

Q12. Disseminate newsletters/webpages highlighting specific teaching strategies and best practices as well as insights into scholarship and research about teaching and learning.
Avg: 3.19  (38.89% chose VERY USEFUL or ESSENTIAL)  n=54

Q8. Provide individual consulting with faculty on preparing their personal teaching statements for their personnel review files.
Avg: 3.17  (40.74% chose VERY USEFUL or ESSENTIAL)  n=54

Q6. Provide training session and resources on methods of peer observations of classroom teaching.
Avg: 3.13  (37.03% chose VERY USEFUL or ESSENTIAL)  n=54

Q11. Facilitate training workshops for department chairs on selected topics (e.g. departmental peer evaluation; disciplinary pedagogical scholarship).
Avg: 2.98  (33.34% chose VERY USEFUL or ESSENTIAL)  n=54

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Q1. What are other activities, programs, and resources that a Teaching Commons at Kalamazoo College could coordinate, support, or facilitate?

I think it would be useful for the Teaching Commons Coordinator to work with the Academic Resource Centers.

A yearly study, coordinated by the Teaching Commons, that highlights an area of study at Kalamazoo College, that produces publishable results and that would help the area of study learn more about their students, how they learn, and how to make their program better.

Assistance with training student teaching assistants; survey and evaluate college practices on use of teaching assistants; develop guidelines on best practices for sharing course assessments with TAs (student grades, feedback)

Technology for classroom innovations.

"embed" a librarian as a liaison for resources to pull together the types of supporting materials (whether housed in TC or in the Library)

Ongoing teaching teams, a group of faculty with similar styles, issues, pedagogy who work together in a committed relationship (to each other and to their teaching process).
Having discussions that address specific communities - teaching while being a woman or teaching while being of color or teaching while being young, etc...

better coordination of other teaching resources-- for example, I think I heard the seminar writing handouts are available online, somewhere, but I've never found them. (Relying instead on paper copies...)

Provide a comfortable cafe type lounge atmosphere for teachers to meet, talk, discuss our passion for teaching. Very isolated community.

Be very explicit about offering resources to and a kind of "home" for adjunct faculty while they are employed at the college (in other words--make it clear that the Teaching Commons is invested in *all* who teach at K).

Linking K faculty to colleagues at other GLCA schools who are working on similar pedagogical issues through the soon-to-be-developed GLCA Teaching and Learning Commons.

Coordinate with Student Development in relation to insights regarding campus climate and teaching, i.e., be sure to have a broader perspective and range of feedback concerning impacts of pedagogy, teaching, etc. student engagement

Support reading groups on interdisciplinary topics or topics of general interest, not just about teaching methods.

I think the physical space is key, and I’d like this to be a place where faculty are actively encouraged to work, meet, talk, even informally. Almost like a 'lounge.' Maybe with some designated times as quiet vs. talking? (Especially if there are going to be resources there, so that it doubles as a 'library' - for this, I’m thinking of examples of different grants, or teaching files, as well as straight pedagogy-related books or articles.) I also think that the more the Commons can be tied to existing events, the better. For example, Faculty Study Group often leads into discussion of teaching (as people think about how others' research might be related to their classes), and it would be nice if the Commons was connected to that somehow. I don't want the Commons to become 'one more thing' that is added on to the structure of the College; I'd like to see it as a hub for lots of other (existing) things.

Q2. What would be the most positive outcomes of the presence of a Teaching Commons at K?

More collaboration and sharing of teaching methods and ideas.

How to do *meaningful* department-wide assessment, especially in the context of disciplines that don't rely on exam outcomes. And how to manage this in writing heavy disciplines without it taking an inordinate amount of time and energy.
Collaboration and professional development among K College employees.

Shared resources pertaining to specific and unique pedagogical problems increased knowledge and use of pedagogical innovations; increase in student perception of their learning

Increased conversation across the faculty about pedagogy and enhanced student learning.

Specific recommendations and experimentations. A fat grant to bring the 21st century to K in the form of a tech ecosystem (rather than the current individual bits of half-working and half-used technology).

Cross-disciplinary discussions about teaching and learning at K...

Helping break the isolated of the individual classroom, providing a space to share our expertise on a regular basis, closing the feedback loop

improved teaching and student learning

Having a dedicated space and point of contact for teaching related concerns. Develop and deepen a learning community and intentional practice.

A way to connect with other people who are having a similar issue in their courses to problem-solve or brainstorm together

Getting us, the faculty members, to talk to each other about our teaching and student learning.

Teaching innovation valued more in promotional decisions.

improving teaching across the board. Perhaps also reaching faculty that don't think they need improvement. We all need improvement all the time - there is no perfect teacher or teaching method and there is always the possibility of improving or even becoming worse, esp. if we don't strive to be flexible and change with the times.

Better outcomes for our students. Recognition of teaching as K's primary strength.

more community, better teaching, happier students.

It would become the center of a thriving community of practice around teaching/learning and SoTL at K. Also, it would help to set the tone--among faculty, administration, AND students--that teaching is always a work in progress--something that we all aspire to do better at all times, and all continually need to work on.
Having a go-to person and place for teaching-related issues will be great. Oftentimes teaching-related issues are "of the moment" - they arise and need figuring out quickly.

Foster a greater transparency and openness regarding what goes on in our classrooms. That is, encourage an environment where faculty feel they can take risks--and adequately assess outcomes of pedagogical choices.

A setting/occasions where pre-tenure faculty especially could find concrete, useful support for teaching as a skill in a non-judgmental manner, which they could apply.

"Better learning outcomes
Increased collegiality"

"Greater sense of cross-department community.
Tool for recruiting excellent new faculty.

Springboard for very important strategic decisions as we think about our mission, values, approach." More frequent and more in-depth conversations among faculty about teaching and learning.

"More frequent conversations about teaching and learning.

Deeper engagement in the craft of teaching."

Elevate the conversation about teaching and learning on campus.

Putting attention to what the College says is the most important thing faculty do.