

## **Proposal to Convert Faculty Professional Development Program into a “Center” at Northern Arizona University**

January 2022

NAU’s commitment to student success requires a parallel commitment to recruiting, developing and supporting outstanding faculty. A key aspect of the university’s effort to fulfill that commitment is the establishment of a “Center” to provide integrated support services and resources that encourage and support faculty success through inclusive excellence in teaching and course design.

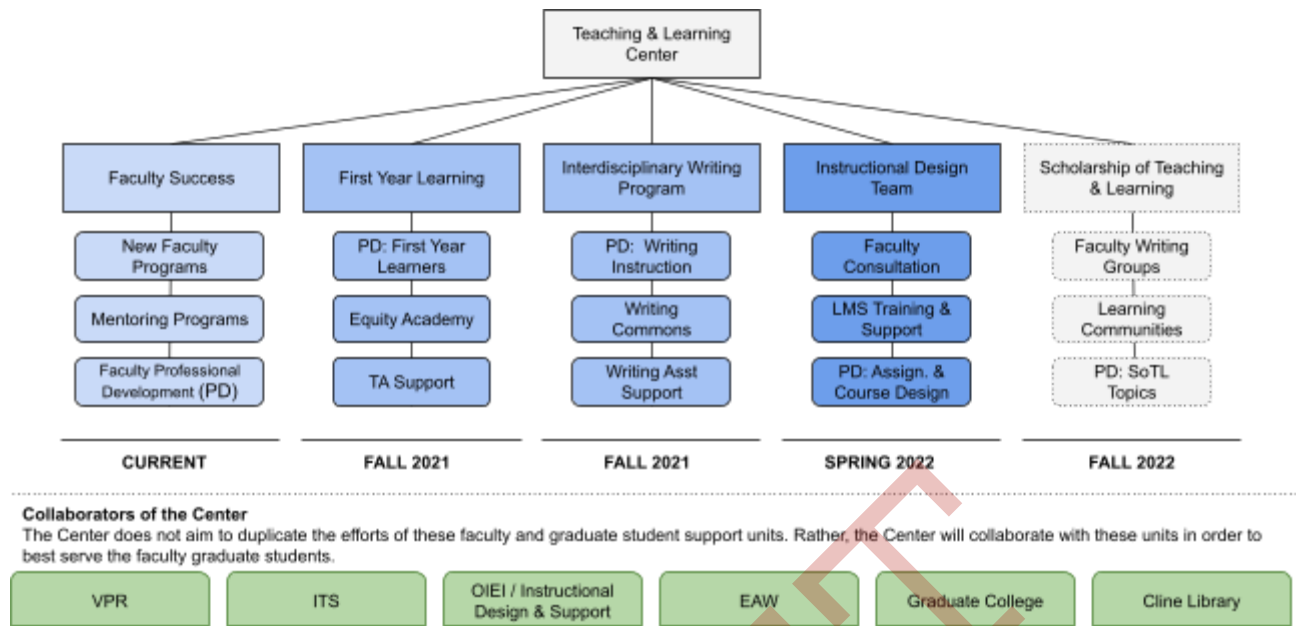
**“With great teaching, students succeed.”  
– Association of College and University Educators (ACUE)**

This proposal describes a re-organization related to teaching and learning design that will strengthen faculty pedagogical excellence through the consolidation of faculty professional learning and support for teaching and learning design as a Center. And, as the ACUE tagline suggests, “With great teaching, students succeed.”

By supporting outstanding teaching and assisting faculty members to design effective and engaging learning environments that create the conditions necessary for student learning and success, the Center will perform a central role in elevating Inclusive Academic Excellence as detailed in NAU’s Strategic Roadmap Goal 1. Establishment of a Center aligns with NAU’s mission and will serve as an important mechanism for achieving our institutional goals of inclusive academic excellence and student success. In addition, elevation of these resources through the unification of the existing support units will enhance the university’s external reputation as an institution that cultivates great teaching.

This proposal describes a reorganization that highlights key benefits of the consolidation of existing programs, presents a draft vision, mission statement and guiding principles, and outlines the Center’s primary functions, proposed space needs, roles that faculty will play in the formation of the Center, and proposed timeline.

Under the leadership of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs (VP-FA), the Center will provide systematic support for new and experienced full and part-time faculty and graduate students in Flagstaff, Yuma, Community Campuses, and Online with the goal of promoting consistent, high-quality academic experiences for NAU students across modalities and locations, with equitable outcomes. Formation of the Center will consolidate the Faculty Professional Development Program (FPDP), the First Year Learning Initiative (FYLI), the Interdisciplinary Writing Program (IWP) and an instructional design team formerly of NAU Online and Innovative Educational Initiatives (OIEI). The Center also aspires to bring on a Faculty Fellow to serve as Director of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning to advance a scholarly teacher model exemplified by President’s Distinguished Teaching Fellows and the NAU Teaching Academy.



## Reorganization and Key Benefits

Key benefits of coordinating the existing programs and personnel into a Center include:

- Create a specialized staff able to provide programming and consultation with faculty on a wide variety of topics including teaching and learning, instructional context and design, and professional growth. Co-locating, organizationally and physically, will allow collaboration and flexibility to support high-priority initiatives.
- Ensure intentional course and curriculum design standards across modalities
- Remove silos and perceived barriers to promote communication/teamwork
- Create operational effectiveness and align service to the goals of NAU's Strategic Roadmap
- Facilitate faculty and graduate students' roles and responsibilities in supporting student success through programming related to the common and unique needs of our diverse student population, including ethnically diverse, underrepresented, culturally diverse, first-generation, high-performing, mainstream majority, and at-risk students

Key benefits of the Center in the immediate and short term at NAU

- Support faculty with course design or conversions for the transition from Liberal Studies Program to General Studies Program with specific attention on the new Diversity Perspectives and American Institutions
- Support faculty involved in curriculum development and teaching related to the General Studies Diversity Perspectives through Faculty Learning Communities, book discussion groups and symposia
- Design and implement a robust set of offerings to support faculty and graduate students transitioning to a new LMS including self-serve, facilitated, and unfacilitated options
- Support faculty with course design and course coordination needs under a newly revised FYLI program

## Draft Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles

*Note that these are simply drafts based on the work of prior Center explorations.*

**Vision:** The Center enhances learning for all students through holistic support of faculty, graduate students and staff.

**Mission:** The Center's mission is to support and advance inclusive excellence in teaching and learning design for the success of faculty and their students.

The Center is a place where University faculty, staff and graduate students work in a collaborative environment to create rich, engaged learning and teaching experiences. The Center supports faculty, prepares graduate students, builds vital partnerships, and invites individuals to become members of an active learning community.

### Guiding Principles

- Ensure that students experience engaging teaching and meaningful courses
- Promote inclusive pedagogical excellence in all modalities and locations with passion for both established and innovative trends in teaching and learning
- Ensure that faculty and graduate students have appropriate opportunities for professional development around teaching and learning
- Cultivate an institutional culture of investment in inclusive pedagogical excellence and student success
- Contribute to institutional goals around student success, retention, and reduction of achievement gaps for underrepresented students
- Enhance the national reputation of NAU as an institution dedicated to great teaching
- Enhance the national reputation of NAU as an institution dedicated to supporting faculty and graduate students

### Primary Functional Areas

The Center seeks to fulfill its mission and realize its vision through:

#### Programming for Faculty/Graduate Student Excellence & Student Success

- Collaborate with faculty in the design and offering of meaningful and effective professional learning that enhances and supports teaching and learning
- Facilitate faculty members' roles and responsibilities in supporting student success and engagement through programming related to the common and unique needs of our diverse student population, including ethnically diverse, underrepresented, culturally diverse, first-generation, high-performing, mainstream majority, and at-risk students
- Engage NAU's Teaching Academy and President's Teaching Fellows as stewards of pedagogical excellence

- Develop equity-minded practitioners
- Provide leadership for scholarly teaching to promote the use of evidence-based teaching practices to enhance student learning
- Provide leadership for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning research to disseminate the work of NAU faculty within and beyond NAU
- Support faculty success through high-quality mentoring programs

### **Instructional Design and Course Development**

- Instructional Design Team - Consult with and provide support for faculty to develop engaging, authentic, effective assignments and courses.
- First Year Learning Initiative - Support course coordinators in becoming equity-minded practitioners while designing their courses to support first-year students through socialization for excellence, intentional course design, and multi-section coordination.
- Interdisciplinary Writing Program - Support faculty who teach at all levels in incorporating writing into their courses, designing writing assignments, and assessing writing. The IWP also provides student writing support through their services at the University Writing Commons.

### **Staffing**

Programming for Faculty Excellence & Student Success – Amy Rushall, Liane Sims

Instructional Design and Course Development – Betsy Buford, Renee Harmon, Vacancy

First Year Learning Initiative – Cody Canning, Liane Sims

Interdisciplinary Writing Program – Alana Kuhlman

### **Faculty Advisory Board**

The Center will incorporate faculty input and involvement through an Advisory Board. The Advisory Board will support the Center’s leadership team in strategic planning, expanding to new initiatives, and in collaborating with other units across the institution.

In its inaugural year, the Board will be charged with:

- Development of a Vision, Mission Statement and Guiding Principles
- Development of a Strategic Plan for the Center that aligns with NAU’s Strategic Roadmap
- Development of an assessment plan
- Planning of activities and processes

The Advisory Board should include faculty and professional staff, representing university faculty members and representatives from various constituencies involved with professional development or faculty support. In particular, as college teachers of the year and President’s Distinguished Teaching Fellows, members of the NAU Teaching Academy should contribute to the Center’s Advisory Board.

## Space

Ideally, the individuals that make up the Center will be co-located in order to offer a one-stop shop for faculty and graduate students, enhanced coordination, increased efficiencies, and shared and integrated services. The programs and individuals of the proposed Center are currently located in multiple locations on campus (Faculty Professional Development Program in Cline Library, Instructional Design in Building 98D on south campus, FYLI Director in SAS and IWP in Riles and Cline Library).

With limited space on the Flagstaff Mountain Campus, we will need to be realistic about our options for co-locating. The current location of the FPDP in Cline Library, Room 169 offers many benefits including a central location, large meeting space, adjacency to research librarians and other library services, ample parking, quick access to the University Writing Commons on Cline Library second floor, and proximity to showcase learning spaces such as Cline Library, Room 200 and Room 249.

The challenge of the current location is the lack of dedicated office space for the Center instructional designers and directors.

## Implications of the Center/Issues to be addressed

- Defining who the Center will serve. Service may be “diluted” if the Center attempts to be all things for all people.
- Clarifying if the Center should be a place for faculty and graduate students who are experts in their content to strengthen their knowledge of the art and science of teaching to become more effective facilitators of learning OR if the Center supports faculty with *all* of the expectations of their faculty role (teaching, service, scholarship/creative activity).
- Many faculty find themselves with little capacity for engaging in the programming offered by the Center. Additionally, faculty have little incentive to participate in professional development if department policies and practices do not assign credit for this type of effort in their annual review.
- The Instructional Design Team may be pulled in different directions by previous unit (OIEI) and current unit (the Center). How will they market their unique services to faculty while minimizing confusion among their clientele? (e.g. Should I call ITS? e-Learning? OIEI? The Center? To get the help I need?)
- How do we make sense of the Center absorbing the student-facing University Writing Commons? Will this type of effort necessarily cause a decline in the quality of service that faculty can expect from the Center?

## What's in a Name?

The name of the Center tends to define either the focus of the work (e.g. Teaching and Learning Center, TLC) or the audience (e.g. Center for Advancing Faculty Excellence, CAFE). The TLC

appears to invite all who teach (graduate students, faculty, student-facing staff) to engage in professional learning around pedagogical best practices. The CAFE seems to provide holistic support for faculty to the exclusion of graduate students and other colleagues.

Name: **Teaching and Learning Center (TLC)**  
Implied Theme: With great teaching, students succeed.--ACUE  
Implied Audience: Faculty, Graduate Students, Staff (e.g., CSTL, First-Generation Programs, Career Development, University Advising)  
Implied Focus: Professional Learning around General Pedagogical Knowledge, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Student Success, Course and Instructional Design

Name: **Center for Advancing Faculty Excellence (CAFE)**  
Implied Theme: When faculty have balance and support for all aspects of their expectations, they will be more able to, in turn, support their students and give to the institution.  
Implied Audience: Faculty  
Implied Focus: Support for meeting expectations (Teaching, Service, Scholarship/Creative Activity), Retention of Faculty (Mentoring, Affinity Groups, Belonging), Promotion and Tenure (with particular attention to early career faculty needs)

## Center Timeline

### Spring 2022

- Seek input from Faculty Senate (Executive Committee 1/3/22, full senate 1/24/22)
- Seek input from Deans Council
- Seek input from Academic Leadership Summit
- Establish the Advisory Board
- Create a strategic plan for the Center
- Identify a location for the Center
- Secure an initial budget
- Establish efficiencies with existing resources and processes

### Summer 2022

- Co-locate Center staff in single location
- Develop Center website

### Fall 2022 and Beyond

- Market and promote the Center to all faculty and graduate students
- Arrange for offerings of workshops and programs drawing on NAU faculty and invited participants from outside NAU
- Develop a set of self-serve resources on which faculty can draw to strengthen their practice

- Offer comprehensive consulting for faculty to acquire assistance in areas such as course development, classroom interactions, assessment practices, and data-informed reflection on student success at the assignment and course levels
- Establish an assessment plan to collect, analyze, and use data to improve the Center's efforts
- Report annually to the Provost and Faculty Senate on the activities and impact of the Center and its work to advance teaching and learning at NAU

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