



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR STAFF AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (NISOD), COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN • WITH SUPPORT FROM THE W. K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION AND THE SID W. RICHARDSON FOUNDATION

A Gift for Teachers

As teachers, we work behind closed doors. Our teaching successes—and our failures—are our secrets, even if we do not want them to be. When something happens in the classroom that seems to work—a teaching strategy, or a solution to a problem that actually *does* solve the problem—there are few ways to celebrate. And when one of our colleagues strikes gold in the classroom, we have no way to benefit. Their doors are closed also.

The Developmental Studies Committee at Jefferson Community College decided to open those doors. Stealing an idea and a name, we decided to create an occasion for teachers to share ideas that work in their classrooms and to invite their colleagues to celebrate, listen, and exchange ideas. We called our celebration GIFT—Great Ideas For Teaching.

We sent invitations to all faculty members, asking that they submit short proposals outlining successful teaching strategies. We explained that they would be presenting their strategies in five 10-minute sessions; colleagues would move from session to session, sampling a smorgasbord of teaching ideas. We sent the invitations and waited and waited. The deadline passed, and we had only a handful of responses. So we extended the deadline, sent new invitations, and engaged in some arm-twisting. Finally, we had enough proposals.

Despite the underwhelming initial response, GIFT was a success. About 30 faculty attended, and 10 of their colleagues presented. The presenters represented a broad cross-section of the faculty. Titles included: Writing: A Moveable Feast; Using Improvisation in the Classroom; Relation Techniques; Using Film and Video Clips to Illustrate Important Concepts; and Visualization Strategies for Helping Students Solve Math Word Problems.

Each presenter was assigned a numbered station with table and chairs. Handouts were stacked on the tables, and overhead projectors and other audio-visual equipment were set up at the stations. A moderator explained that faculty members could select any station for a 10-minute presentation. At the end of the 10 minutes, a bell would sound; the guests were to move to another station, and the presentations would be repeated. After 90 minutes, the final bell sounded, but many of the participants remained to discuss the presentations among themselves and with the presenters.

Given only 10 minutes, presenters found they had to trim their ideas to the essentials. One presenter said he thought he had done a better job with 10 minutes than he would have with 60. "You really cut to the essentials," he said. "And, frankly, most people in the audience don't walk away with much more than that anyway. I just tried to get them interested. If they *are* interested, they can ask for more information or read more on the subject."

After the first GIFT, 91 percent of the respondents gave the highest possible grade to "degree of usefulness of information," 96 percent gave the highest possible grade to "level of sufficiency of information," "knowledgeability of the presentation" and "overall quality of the presentation." Asked if they would recommend the program, 96 percent said yes. Asked if they could apply the information, respondents added such comments as, "All the ideas were wonderful" and "definitely."

The GIFT program was repeated a year later. Twenty-five faculty attended, and nine of their colleagues presented. Topics included: Grin and Pair it—Success with Paired Classes; The Use of Games in History; Dream Analysis in Psychology 110; and With Taste and Style—Researching International Foodways. More than 90 percent of the attendees who evaluated the presentations gave them a grade of A or B. The GIFT program gave creative teachers a chance to show off and share; it also helped faculty shop for ideas that may help them become more creative in their own classrooms.



Authors' Postscript

GIFT was an idea taken from the Annual Convention of the Speech Communication Association, which hosts "Great Ideas for Teaching Speech"; Raymond "Bud" Zeuschner from California Poly State University who created the format; and Kerry Reynolds from Lake Tahoe College who created the acronym.

Michael Ginsberg, *Developmental Studies Committee*
Patricia Case, *Developmental Studies Committee*

For further information, contact the authors at Jefferson Community College, 1000 Community College Drive, Louisville, KY 40272.



THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR STAFF AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (NISOD)
 Community College Leadership Program, Department of Educational Administration
 College of Education, The University of Texas at Austin, SZB 348, Austin, Texas 78712

A Neutral Third Party: The College Ombudsman Service

The Ombudsman Service was established four years ago at El Centro College because a growing number of students were having difficulties resolving issues and concerns. For example, verbal confrontational approaches often were unsuccessful, and issues finally had to be resolved through formal means. Students needed an approach that was non-threatening and outside formal resolution channels.

Purpose

The Ombudsman Service provides an expeditious, informal, confidential level of problem solving and conflict resolution for students, faculty, and staff. It is based on the assumption that most members of the college community, if given the tools and the opportunity, will prefer to settle differences peacefully, through civilized dialogue and facilitated negotiation. Our practical experiences and informal research have convinced us that when conflict resolution occurs before disputants are forced into formal disciplinary hearings or grievance proceedings, the potential for productive, continuing relationships is greatly increased.

Reactions to the Service

Students, faculty, and staff have used the Ombudsman Service extensively. Students come with problems that range from frustrating bureaucratic hassles to perceived or real classroom inequities. They also seek mediation for student/student conflicts. Some students are self-referred; others are referred by faculty and staff.

Division deans, faculty, and staff bring problems and concerns about student behavior, intra- and inter-division faculty relationships, perceived or real inequities, and supervisor-supervisee misunderstandings. They also seek mediation for serious conflicts or differences.

There has been a decrease in the number of formal grievances filed by students and a respectable number of threatened student and employee grievances have been resolved informally.

Conditions for Success

Formal evaluation responses and informal feedback reveal certain conditions that seem to contribute to the success of the Ombudsman Service:

- The Ombudsman must be a credible, well-respected expert in facilitation/mediation. She/he must be thoroughly familiar with college policies/procedures (including sexual harassment, personnel evaluation, and student disciplinary/grievance policies and procedures).
- The college president and other campus leaders must demonstrate a belief in and support of informal, no-fault problem solving as both an expectation and guiding principle of the organizational culture.
- The Ombudsman must be able to respond quickly to "crisis" situations.
- The neutrality and objectivity of the Ombudsman must be protected by a neutral reporting line (in our case, to the college president) and not viewed as belonging to a particular division or area.
- The Ombudsman Office must be located in a neutral area where all clients have easy access. The office must be large enough for four or five people to engage in discussions or meetings.

The Ombudsman Service is being expanded to include a diverse panel of five conflict resolution specialists who will be available to clients who express a preference for gender, physical ability, age, or race representation. The panel members are full-time counseling faculty or student development administrators. What started as a reasoned experiment has met a need and is working.

Wright L. Lassiter, Jr., President
Bettie Tully, Counselor/Ombudsman

For further information, contact the authors at El Centro College, Main and Lamar, Dallas, TX 75202.

NISOD's SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TEACHING EXCELLENCE

AUSTIN CONVENTION CENTER
MAY 21 - 24, 1995

Join educators from around the world for eight preconference seminars, five keynote presentations, and more than 200 breakout sessions at this annual celebration of teaching excellence.

For more information, call *Suanne D. Roueche, Director, NISOD, 512/471-7545.*

Suanne D. Roueche, Editor

March 10, 1995, Vol. XVII, No. 8

© The University of Texas at Austin, 1995
Further duplication is permitted by MEMBER
institutions for their own personnel.

INNOVATION ABSTRACTS is a publication of the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD), Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, SZB 348, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas 78712, (512) 471-7545. Funding in part by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and the Sid W. Richardson Foundation. Issued weekly when classes are in session during fall and spring terms. ISSN 0199-106X.