

## Elevating Your Educational “Hotness”: Achieving Teaching Excellence

Recently, my colleagues and I facilitated a National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) webinar titled, “Bird by Bird: Creating a Culture of Teaching Excellence.” The webinar focused on creating a culture of teaching excellence through the lens of an educational developer. We didn’t anticipate it, but more faculty were drawn to our webinar than were educators responsible for providing faculty professional development opportunities. What we learned from questions asked during the webinar and from the post-webinar survey results is that faculty are extremely interested in learning more about the attributes that excellent teachers possess. As a result, we created a NISOD webinar titled “Elevating Your Educational ‘Hotness’: Achieving Teaching Excellence.” This *Innovation Abstracts* with the same title provides an overview of the ideas discussed during the webinar.

During a brainstorming session with Broward College’s Center for Teaching Excellence and Learning (CTEL) team, we considered webinar titles that would be catchy and serve as a “hook” to attract a large audience, as well as articulate the message we wanted to convey. A title suggested by the millennials in the room was “Get Lit: Achieving Teaching Excellence.” After they explained the meaning of “get lit,” my Generation X and Baby Boomer colleagues and I politely vetoed the suggestion. We also talked about how many of our students use RateMyProfessors.com to determine which professor’s course to take, and how many faculty reference their RateMyProfessors.com ratings in various settings.

I started my career as a full-time faculty member, but I now teach as an adjunct faculty member. As a faculty member, I have often mused at discussions about RateMyProfessors.com’s chili pepper rating, an indication of a professor’s attractiveness or lack thereof, reflections that led to the word “hotness” being used in the *Innovation Abstracts* and webinar titles. In addition to hoping to appeal to a large audience, we also wanted to convey to community and technical college faculty that there are core attributes they can enhance or develop that directly foster teaching excellence.

What is the definition of “teaching excellence” we aspire to achieve? After conducting some research on teaching excellence, Penn State’s Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence’s definition resonated the most with us. According to Baker et al. (2005) Teaching excellence is viewed

as an academic process by which students are motivated to learn in ways that make a sustained, substantial, and positive influence on how they think, act, and feel, and a process that elevates students to a level where they learn deeply and remarkably because of teacher attributes.

Broward College’s Center for Teaching Excellence and Learning primarily promotes four faculty attributes: (1) subject matter expert, (2) pedagogical expert (andragogy), (3) student-centered mindset, and (4) assessment advocate. By systematically designing programs with these attributes at the forefront, Broward College creates an institutional environment of faculty success that leads to student success.

### Background

In July 2013, I had the unique opportunity to serve as Broward College’s District Director for its first Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). For those unfamiliar with a QEP, it is a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges’ (SACSCOC) requirement for reaffirmation of accreditation. In 2013, SACSCOC’s purpose for the QEP was to enhance student learning and/or the learning environment. The first QEPs were due to SACSCOC during 2004-2005, and it was rare that a college had not started or completed a QEP by 2013.

Because of my research interests and prior experience working on two different QEPs at varying stages, I jumped at the opportunity to serve as Broward College’s QEP District Director. The timing of Broward College’s QEP allowed me to work with multiple college stakeholders and finalize the enhancement plan before submitting it to SACSCOC. Based on my prior experiences at Central Carolina Community College and Miami Dade College, I knew exactly what Broward College’s QEP needed to include in order to be successful. This knowledge resulted in a QEP with a conceptual framework consisting of faculty professional development, teaching and learning strategies, and outcomes-based assessment.

Through a collaborative endeavor beginning with the general education faculty, the QEP gained great momentum and respect among Broward College faculty and staff. As a result, Broward College’s QEP became the poster-child for a faculty mentoring program. Faculty began using and talking about the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ VALUE rubrics. Then, a QEP mathematics professor, using one of his QEP assignments, attended a National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment charrette. Instead of the QEP becoming stagnant, it continued to flourish, with faculty from nursing, dental assisting,

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accounting, and business becoming involved. The question then became how to further scale up and scale out the QEP. One answer was to find a way to take the synergy and promising practices derived from the QEP and have them permeate throughout the entire institution. As a result, in September 2016, the college created what's been coined as a "real" Center for Teaching Excellence and Learning.

### Core Attributes

This *Innovation Abstracts* features resources that help faculty enhance and develop certain attributes recognized in excellent teachers: pedagogical expertise, a student-centered mindset, and being an assessment advocate. (In addition to the resources shared via this publication and the webinar, NISOD also provides excellent resources in multiple modalities that support these attributes.)

### Pedagogical Expert

The first point of clarification we made at Broward College was to express that when we referenced pedagogy, we were not minimizing the importance of andragogy, nor were we ignoring that there is a difference between the two. We learned quickly when working with faculty that they want to make sure andragogy is acknowledged. We couch our conversations by stating that when we use the terms pedagogy and pedagogical, we are inclusive of andragogy, but pedagogy is more commonly used and easier to pronounce. In simple terms, a pedagogical expert is the guide on the side, not the sage on the stage. Faculty who become experts in this area focus on active learning and interactive lectures.

In addition to professional development programming offered by the Center, we recommend faculty use resources identified by the Center. Some quality, free resources that focus on pedagogy are:

- The Association of College and University Educators' (ACUE) weekly email newsletter: ACUE has developed an online course focused on effective teaching practices that addresses essential teaching skills and knowledge. The course is not free, but the newsletter is. The newsletter provides teaching tips and recommendations. <https://community.acue.org/newsletter/>
- The Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network in higher education has a free listserv called the POD Network Open Discussion Group. Not only are there discussions that focus on ideas that can be used immediately in the classroom, there are discussions that focus on additional resources, such as scholarly articles and books. <http://podnetwork.org/open-discussion-group/>

### Student-Centered Mindset

We found that there is some overlap between how we support the pedagogical expert attribute and the student-centered mindset attribute. Therefore, when

we help faculty with the student-centered mindset attribute, we believe it goes beyond increasing the quality of instruction; it encompasses interactions and engagements with students in and out of the classroom. We want faculty to have the tools needed to consistently plan effective learning experiences for students.

As a participating college in the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Pathways Project, Broward College has put more emphasis on the entire student experience, which has resulted in more collaboration between academic affairs and student services. The AACC Pathways Project focuses on building community colleges' capacity to design and implement structured academic and career pathways. One example of Broward College being student-centered is a recent partnership between the college's career center and the CTETL, which resulted in a workshop that helps faculty have conversations with students about their careers. The workshop shares specific resources for career exploration and shows faculty how to use these resources.

A quality, free resource that focuses on a student-centered mindset and pedagogy is:

- Faculty Focus newsletter: Magna Publications' Faculty Focus features innovative strategies, best practices, and fresh perspectives for creating a better learning environment. NISOD has partnered with Magna Publications to provide faculty, staff, and administrators at NISOD-member colleges a substantial discount on [Faculty Focus Premium](http://www.nisod.org/magnadiscount/). [www.nisod.org/magnadiscount/](http://www.nisod.org/magnadiscount/)

### Assessment Advocate

Assessment can be described as the glue that holds teaching excellence together. In order to achieve teaching excellence, faculty members need to be able to systematically and continuously use assessment to improve their teaching and their students' learning. To foster this attribute, CTETL offers faculty the opportunity to earn an outcomes-based assessment micro-credential (i.e., badge). To earn the badge, faculty complete a minimum of eight college designed and facilitated courses that include authentic assessment, program-level outcomes assessment, rubrics, and other topics. We have found that faculty are more receptive to using formative assessments so they can assist students as the learning occurs versus using mid-term and final exams as the primary evidence of learning. CTETL and the Office of Outcomes and Assessment partnered to support faculty assessment needs at the course and program levels.

Some quality, free resources that focus on assessment include:

- The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) assists institutions discover and adopt promising practices in assessing college student learning outcomes. In addition to a website with resources, faculty can join NILOA's email list.

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<http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org>

- The Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education has a free listserv called ASSESS. This listserv is great for asking questions and getting insightful and helpful responses. <https://www.coe.uky.edu/lists/helists.php>

As community and technical college faculty members continue to meet the needs of students, colleges need to craft innovative, yet practical ways to provide appropriate resources and professional development opportunities beyond the one-and-done workshop or training session. Broward College's Center for Teaching Excellence and Learning has taken steps to accomplish this by defining teaching excellence and focusing on attributes that assist faculty members elevate their educational "hotness."

*How can colleges help their faculty members develop the attributes seen in excellent teachers? Tell us in the comment section or on [Facebook](#)!*

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## References

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