Annual Report
Center for Research on Teaching Excellence
July 14, 2008

Mission:

The Center for Research on Teaching Excellence advocates a union of scholarship and instruction that is grounded in the academic principles of research and evidence. To enable students to excel academically, we support a campus-wide culture that values, fosters, and rewards continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

The Center's director was hired in March, 2007, with a charge to develop a new teaching and learning center at UC Merced. Several months thereafter, the director met separately with more than 35 faculty, administrators, staff, and graduate and undergraduate students to assess campus needs and expectations for the proposed Center. Based on these consultations, the Center's mission emerged to engage the entire UC Merced academic community in the scholarly practices of teaching and learning.

During the summer of 2007 the director contacted by phone or met in person with six colleagues holding similar positions at other UC campuses (UC San Diego, Irvine, Santa Cruz, Davis, Santa Barbara and Riverside). These external contacts at other sister institutions helped to refine the Center's role at a research university, specifically to align established research methods with the design and delivery of effective instruction.

The ongoing Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) accreditation review of our campus prompted the final and perhaps most important aspect of the Center's mission as we all strive to remain focused on improvement in teaching that enables students to excel as learners. This student-centered perspective was strongly endorsed by the Center staff when our mission statement was officially approved on 1/17/08.

Center Staff:

Dr. Laura Martin, Assessment Coordinator
Dr. Anne Zanzucchi, Assessment Coordinator
Dr. Michael Truong, Faculty Development Coordinator
Dr. Karen Dunn-Haley, Faculty Development Coordinator

Mary Smith, MA TESOL, English Language Institute Coordinator
Adriana Signorini, MA TESOL, ELI Specialist

Dr. Robert Ochsner, Director
Juana Dumagan, Administrative Assistant

To implement the Center's mission, in the summer and fall of 2007 the director hired six part-time staff members, most of whom have at least 50% appointments in the Center

with shared responsibilities for assessment and faculty development. Two of the six staff members work in the Center's English Language Institute to test and train international teaching assistants and to develop academic-support programs for undergraduates who have limited proficiency in English.

In fall of 2007 the director also hired Dr. Amy Driscoll as a part-time consultant. A national authority on assessment and accreditation, Dr. Driscoll was the former director of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment at CSU-Monterey Bay (1996-2004). Her experience at CSUMB has immediate relevance to UC Merced. As a relatively new university founded in 1994, CSUMB provided an important "start-up" comparison, and its relatively small enrollment (3700 students in 2005) served as a benchmark for our growth towards similar numbers (e.g., c.2700 students in AY2008-2009). In her role as a consultant, Dr. Driscoll visited the campus to advise the Center on strategies for engaging faculty and other constituents in Center activities; she and her CSUMB colleague Dr. Swarup Wood also met with UC Merced faculty and administrators to recommend strategies and conduct assessment workshops as we prepare for WASC accreditation review.

Center Services and Programs:

- WASC Syllabus-Alignment Project: Spring Semester 2008

  As an administrative priority, the Center has implemented a syllabus-alignment project recommended by Dr. Driscoll. The immediate objective of this project is to ensure that by Fall 2009 all course syllabi have explicit goals and outcomes, as required for the WASC Educational Effectiveness review in 2010. To that end, during Spring semester 2008 all Center staff facilitated small workshops or met individually with faculty in anthropology, math, physics, writing, foreign languages, "Core" general education, and psychology. These programs were targeted initially because they offer courses that enroll a majority of undergraduates, especially during the crucial freshman year, and they represent a cross-section of disciplines throughout the university. Additionally, Center staff offered similar accreditation workshops and in-office consultations with any faculty member or faculty group that requested our assistance. In all, during Spring semester 2008 nearly 31% of faculty (n=29) participated at least once in a workshop or conference that addressed the syllabus-alignment project, and 42 (n=39) participated at least once in a Center workshop or individual consultation on general topics of teaching.

  During the summer of 2008 the Center staff obtained and reviewed all course syllabi to identify those with explicit goals and outcomes and to target courses that still need to include these requirements. In Fall semester 2008 the staff will meet with any faculty member who needs assistance in listing goals and outcomes on syllabi.

- Faculty Development Workshops and Consultations (Laura Martin and Anne Zanzucchi)

During Spring 2008 the Center staff offered a total of 14 one-hour workshop sessions, typically doing two sessions per topic: Active Learning and Effective Lecturing, Disabilities Services, Scoring Rubrics, Teaching Nontraditional Students, WASC Accreditation, and Grant Writing. The staff also conducted 26 individual sessions with faculty who could not attend the workshops. Similarly, more than half of UC Merced's professorial faculty (n=56) were interviewed so that the Center would have a better idea of faculty interests and concerns about teaching and learning. Shown below in Chart 1 is the number of participants in these Center activities and in related ones. The total of 230 participants includes those who attended more than one activity.

Chart 1: Summary of Center Activities for Spring 2008

Number of Participants by Type of Appointment

Type of Center Event

	Professors	**Lecturers**	**TAs**	**Administrators**	Sum
Teaching and Learning Workshops (14 sessions)	43	23	13	2	81
Faculty Consultations	24	2			26
Faculty Interviews	55	1			56
WASC syllabus alignment workshops (4 sessions)	29				29
WASC accreditation orientations (3 sessions)	14	6		18	38
TOTALS	165	32	13	20	230

Even allowing for recurring attendance by the some participants, these results clearly show that the Center has successfully engaged faculty in its activities during the first full semester of Center operation. That is, of the 84 total Senate faculty reported for Fall 2007 (IPA data, http://ipa.ucmerced.edu/docs/Faculty%20-20staff/Academic%20Personnel.pdf), more than half participated in at least one Center activity in Spring 2008. By design, the Center focused on involving professorial faculty since they have a key responsibility for the design and supervision of the curriculum. In AY 2008-2009 the Center will extend its activities to include more lecturers and TAs.

- CRTE Website and Newsletters

The Center's website can be accessed at http://crte.ucmerced.edu/ with links to our first two issues of the CRTE Newsletter and to other Center projects and resources.

- Mini-Grant and Fellowship Awards

In March 2008 the Center began accepting applications for Mini-Grant and Fellowship awards. Mini-grants of $5,000 are awarded to individual faculty who submit a proposal that addresses some significant aspect of teaching and learning; successful applicants must also examine specific evidence of effective teaching or some other educational experience that promotes student learning. Fellowships confer up to $7,000 to a faculty member's School for a one-course release from teaching responsibilities in order to have the fellow devote the equivalent time to learning more about "best practices" of effective teaching and participate as a presenter in Center workshops.

In Spring semester 2008, the Center received five mini-grant applications and awarded three proposals. One fellowship application was submitted but review was postponed pending completion of a mini-grant awarded to the same applicant. All recipients were assistant professors, two in social sciences and one in natural sciences.

- ELI Summer Bridge (Mary Smith)

During the summer of 2007, a Bridge program was piloted for nine students with the goal of enhancing the academic success skills of underrepresented students. Throughout the Fall 2007 and Spring 2008 semesters, ELI staff met and collaborated with Admissions personnel and educators from the surrounding county to facilitate admission of these students to the Summer 2008 program. Twenty-four students enrolled who represent 12 high schools and three counties. Of these students, 11 speak another language solely or mostly in their homes. These students are receiving instruction and support in reading and writing, as well as academic and social skills that promote successful transition to the university. Assessment of the skills they are developing and confidence they are gaining is ongoing.

- ELI Testing, Placement, and Training of International Graduate Students (Mary Smith)

The State of California mandates that the oral competency and presentation skills of all instructional staff whose first language is not English be evaluated before they begin teaching. That evaluation of oral proficiency began in Spring 2008 for five current UC Merced teaching staff and 12 potential international teaching assistants (ITAs). Of this latter group, five were admitted for Fall 2008.

A semester-long workshop was piloted with three current ITAs and one international scholar who lacked fluency in oral English. During this course, the participants worked on their individual language skills and investigated the cultural aspects of teaching at a U.S. institution that may vary from their country of origin. They also began to evaluate their teaching practices and how effectively they communicate in their classrooms, planning steps to improve their teaching and oral communication skills. All incoming ITAs (20) for Fall 2008 will be evaluated for their oral

competency and those who demonstrate incomplete proficiency will participate in the Oral Communication workshop, receiving support in language and cultural accommodation to the American educational setting.

- Faculty and TA Orientations (Karen Dunn-Haley)

During faculty preparation week (i.e., the week before classes start on August 26), the Center will conduct two orientations, one for new faculty and lecturers (date TBD) and the other for new TAs (8/19/08). We will use these occasions to introduce participants to teaching at UC Merced, specifically as they address the learning needs of "at risk" undergraduates. The latter include first-generation students who are first in their family to attend college; and generation 1.5 students who are fluent in spoken English and another language but not fluent in standard academic discourse, especially for formal writing and public speaking. These orientations also provide an opportunity for the Center to introduce faculty and TAs to key principles of accreditation such as distinguishing between teaching goals and learning outcomes and "closing the loop" through action research.

For AY 2008-2009 the Center is planning a "Year of the Syllabus" – a series of workshops centered on syllabus components and focused on preparing for syllabus alignment and WASC review. The orientations for new faculty and TAs will introduce the "Year of the Syllabus," and potentially offer new lecturers connections with peer mentors. These orientations will feature Mary Smith's workshop "Who Are Our Students?". The Center is also planning for an all-campus "Teaching Day," in the fall semester to mirror the emphasis in the spring semester on "Research Day."

- Center Self-Assessment (Karen Dunn-Haley)

<u>Center Self-Assessment</u>
Throughout spring semester 2008, the Center kept careful records of faculty consultations and engaged in continual assessment of its activities. Center staff recorded every contact with UCM faculty and staff. In addition, at each presentation or workshop, participants were asked to fill out an assessment, including responses to questions regarding their school and faculty status, as well as their sense of the most important aspect of the workshops. On a scale of 1 to 5, participants were asked to indicate whether the workshops increased their awareness of best practices in a particular area, and most often there was space for participants to indicate whether they would use any of the information provided at the workshop. An analysis of each workshop assessment was posted on CROPS. In addition, at mid-semester, all Center staff assessed the effectiveness of the Center to date and suggested potential improvements; again, all staff assessments were posted on CROPS. (See Appendix One for an example of one assessment that has been updated in July 2008.)

Staff also sought to increase their own skills and knowledge by attending professional conferences. Four members of the Center, including the Director, attended WASC workshops at Irvine in October 2007. Three members of staff attended the WASC annual

meeting in San Diego in April 2008, and three also took part in UC21st, an all-U.C. conference on teaching and technology held at U.C. Davis in June 2008. Both English Language Institute members attended a conference in New York in spring 2008. Materials from these events were posted on CROPS for all Center staff to share, and staff provided reports on what they learned -- in some instances full PowerPoint presentations.

- Faculty Survey of Center Services (Mike Truong)

In March 2008 the Center conducted an online faculty survey (targeted at Lecturers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Professors), and about a one-third of the faculty responded (N=58). One of the primary goals of the survey was to assess what types of potential workshops and support faculty might find important and useful. Results from the survey (Tables 1-3) will inform the Center's workshop and service offerings in the 2008-2009 academic year. More details about the survey results are available upon request.

Table 1: Undergraduate characteristics that faculty respondents indicated a 'high level of interest' in learning more about for instruction planning purposes.

Undergraduate Characteristics	***Faculty Response***
Level of preparation for college studies	67.2%
Learning styles	53.4%
Motivation to succeed academically	51.7%
Perspectives as first-generation students	36.2%
Linguistic challenges with English as a second language	29.3%
Issues associated with learning disabilities	22.4%

Table 2: Potential workshop topics rated by respondents as highly or moderately useful.

Types of Workshops	***Faculty Response***
Mentoring undergraduates	70.7%
Integrating learning goals and outcomes into course planning, syllabi and instruction	69%
Curricula development (e.g. forming test questions, creating assignments, rubrics etc.)	65.6%
Mentoring graduate students	63.8%
Teaching with technology	60.4%
Defining and assessing discipline-wide goals and outcomes for student learning	60.3%
Designing useful classroom surveys	58.6%
Developing capstone projects in a discipline	58.6%
Developing electronic teaching portfolios	50%
Implementing student portfolios	39.7%

Table 3: Teaching practices currently employed by responding faculty.

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Teaching Practices	***Faculty Response***
Interactive lectures	69%
Active learning	52%
Project-based learning activities	47%
Cooperative/group learning	40%
Inquiry-based teaching	38%
Problem/case-based learning strategies	38%
Learner-centered practices	21%

APPENDICES

Appendix One: Center Initiatives for Faculty Development (Karen Dunn-Haley)

1. Develop and distribute the CRTE newsletter: In Spring 2008 the Center published two issues of its newsletter and is preparing to publish a third that will be distributed to new faculty before the fall semester begins. All newsletters have addressed the need to introduce CRTE and its mission to UCM, and in both newsletters, the sidebar stressing the WASC timeline aimed to increase campus awareness of the pending WASC review. Both newsletters included faculty voices and provided online resources, thus also achieving the goal of creating a learning community and supporting faculty and grad students with teaching resources. The second newsletter reported on the results of the faculty survey and included sidebars that were especially informative, e.g. statistics on our undergraduates and a website for the program "Preparing Future Faculty."

2. Conduct faculty interviews: Center staff have interviewed about 35% of all professorial faculty; the interviews are posted in CROPS. More faculty were served when they requested information relating to the workshops and were approached individually. The Center also has maintained a contact list for every instance staff have met with UCM staff and faculty individually. This list indicates 141 contacts as of July 11, including workshops and interviews. The faculty's references to CRTE in their answers to the SAP survey reveal that word is out about the Center's existence and mission.

3. Develop and post CRTE website: The website has been created, and since April it has been developed to include teaching resources and models for syllabi. The site also archives past newsletters, and the links available within the newsletters and on the site should assist faculty in the long run. Mike Truong has assumed primary responsibility for CRTE website development and management.

4. Develop web-based pedagogical resources for faculty, lecturers and teaching assistants: The second newsletter and the updated website have made an excellent start at achieving this outcome. In addition, Center staff collected a significant number of

news articles and online resources that should interest faculty. These materials are available within CROPS to Center staff. Selectively bringing these articles to the attention of faculty through distribution of our newsletters, workshop handouts, and possibly weekly or monthly faculty emails is the next step.

5. Support development of both programmatic and course based learning goals and outcomes. With faculty, develop syllabi that model how to use learning outcomes and connect them to pedagogy: Several faculty have met individually with Center staff to begin this process. The WASC workshops offered by Amy Driscoll and the Center's WASC workshop have emphasized the need to undertake this project, and many faculty now understand that they must examine their programs and their syllabi. Several programs (Math, Psychology, Physics, and Anthropology) took advantage of April 14 and 15 sessions with Swarup Wood, as well as individual appointments with Center staff. Remarkable progress has been made toward meeting this outcome, given the short time the Center has been in operation. The Anthropology Program, which has established a new major, has made significant progress mapping program goals with outcomes to complete their syllabus alignment beyond the course level.

6. Support development of teaching portfolios and student e-portfolios: In the later part of the spring semester and over the summer, Mike Truong has worked with campus IT and outside vendors to further this goal. Laura Martin and Mike Truong have expressed interest in researching the use of eportfolios in science classrooms and hope to make this a Center research project with potential grant support. Center staff recognize the potential of using teaching eportfolios as tools for senate faculty and lecturer professional development, and workshops introducing the concept to faculty are being planned for 2008-2009.

7. Support teaching assistant education courses; provide instruction support to faculty and graduate student teaching assistants upon request. Mary Smith has worked extensively on a program for International T.A.s for 2008-2009. In the spring semester 2008, the Center collaborated with the library and Career Services Center to offer a grant-writing workshop for graduate students. The Center is planning to offer an all-campus series of "Teaching Matters" workshops in 2008-2009 for graduate students/T.A.s that will focus on both professional development and on teaching. Lecturers will be sought to give presentations, and some senior faculty may also be asked to present.

8. **Support Teaching Matters workshop series:** The Center in conjunction with the Writing Program presented the "Teaching Matters" series in Fall 2007. A Center subcommittee on 2008-2009 workshops is currently planning this series for Fall 2008.

Additional Center Projects for Fall 2008:

9. Create a Faculty Mentor Program: Karen Dunn-Haley has begun to gather information on current practices for faculty mentoring at our campus. The Writing Program has a professional development program for lecturers that involves peer

mentoring through triads, with each triad member visiting another triad member's and providing support and feedback. The Math program assigns lecturers to senior faculty, and Life Sciences is in the process of following Math's example. In talking to faculty, Dr. Dunn Haley has noted that a number of them refer to senior-junior faculty mentoring done within their own academic programs, and they seem to think the established relationships are working. Faculty-Student mentoring will increase with the introduction of the McNair Program on campus this fall. And student peer mentoring is offered through a grant administered by the Writing Program. Mike Truong and Karen Dunn-Haley have talked with Rachael Martin about grad student mentoring, and as a start, they recommended that Rachael ask the more senior grad students to pair with new grad students as an initial safety net and informal mentoring network. Through Center workshops, we should be able to provide a greater level of support in the coming year.

Lecturers could be encouraged to use participation in Center workshops as a means of documenting their professional development and a means to improve their chances of gaining a 6th year contract.

10. Further the Knowledge of Center Staff in WASC and the literature of teaching and learning: Towards this end, staff started a book group at the end of the spring semester and met twice to discuss readings. In Fall 2008 all Center staff will be encouraged to attend the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education (**POD**) conference in Reno, Nevada (October 22-26). POD is the main professional organization for centers of teaching and learning.