HOW TO REDESIGN A COLLEGE COURSE USING NCAT'S METHODOLOGY

IX. How to Address Faculty Matters

Clearly, faculty members are crucial to the redesign and are involved at every stage. Certain issues, however, are particular to faculty members' situations—such as their changing roles, responsibilities, workloads, and training, all of which we address in this chapter. Some institutions are fortunate to have all instructors buy into and support the redesign, but most encounter some resistance along the way—resistance that ranges from mild to severe. Thus, we also provide some ideas about how others have dealt with faculty resistance to the new way of teaching.

The Faculty Role

Q: How does the instructor's role change?

A: In redesigned courses, the faculty role frequently changes from that of the sage on the stage to the guide on the side. Faculty members become facilitators of student learning, architects of meaningful learning activities, and managers of a diverse group of instructional personnel with distinct roles of their own. Faculty members spend decreased amounts of time preparing and presenting lectures, grading homework, or preparing and grading tests. Therefore, they can dedicate more time to helping students. Redesign represents a huge adjustment for many experienced instructors and for inexperienced instructors as well. At the same time, it is a very *rewarding* experience for instructors, as reported by experienced redesign teams.

Q: Doesn't course redesign reduce the interaction between students and instructors?

A: On the contrary, there is *more* interaction between students and instructors than ever before, and that interaction is more meaningful, more individualized, and more focused. The main reason students learn better under a redesign model is that they become less passive about and more actively involved with course content, and they receive help based on their individual needs.

Q: Who should be responsible for the course?

A: Someone must take overall responsibility for ensuring that the course works well, that all students have the same learning experiences and assessments, and that all course policies and procedures get implemented consistently. Make sure you have a course coordinator or project leader who can offer the necessary leadership. In smaller institutions, the department chair usually has overall responsibility for ensuring that the course works well, that all students have the same learning experiences and assessments, and that all course policies and procedures get implemented consistently. In larger institutions, a course coordinator might assume that responsibility. At the same time, it is important to emphasize teamwork and to involve others in the decision-making process. As in the traditional format, instructors themselves are responsible for their individual sections.

Q: Doesn't reducing costs suggest a negative impact on faculty such as loss of tenure track lines, deskilling the professoriate, or loss of funding to the department or program?

A: The goal of course redesign is not to threaten the faculty role in instruction but rather to re-envision it. The idea is to enable faculty to use higher-level skills and knowledge to design and offer the course while assigning lower-level skill-based activities to other instructional personnel, as discussed in Chapter IV.

In the past, cost reduction in higher education has meant loss of jobs, but that's not the NCAT approach. In the vast majority of NCAT course redesign projects, the cost savings achieved through redesigned courses remained in the department that generated the savings; and the savings achieved were used for instructional purposes. NCAT thinks of cost savings as reallocations of resources that enable faculty and their institutions to achieve their wish lists of things they would like to do if they had additional resources.

Institutional participants have used cost savings in the following ways.

- To offer additional or new courses that previously could not be offered
- To satisfy unmet student demand by serving more students with the same resource base
- To break up academic bottlenecks—courses that delay students' progress within a subject area or program because the areas or programs are oversubscribed
- To increase faculty released time for research, renewal, or additional course development
- To fund undergraduate research programs
- To deal effectively with budget cuts without diminished quality
- To apply to combinations of these

Faculty Workload

Q: What redesigned teaching load is equivalent to a traditional three-credit-hour course?

A: There is no simple answer to that question because every institution and every department has a different set of rules (policies and procedures) in regard to faculty load. Redesign will require revisiting some of those rules because of the way that redesigned courses are structured. For instance, a teaching assignment that used to consist of a three-day-a-week hour-long lecture with paper assessments may now be very different because the software can provide most of the lecture and can automate most of the assessments, and other kinds of personnel can carry out different instructional tasks.

A common assumption in higher education is that instructors spend two hours outside class (preparing and grading) for every one hour spent in class. That means that a three-credit course typically requires the instructor to spend nine hours per week on the course. Because both the in-class time and the preparation and grading time are reduced in a course redesign, instructor time must be reallocated accordingly. You will need to make decisions based on your own institutional rules and the changes you made to achieve the redesigned course structure. In addition, many institutions ask instructors to schedule some of their office hours in a lab or help center so that they can provide assistance for all students in the lab when they don't have scheduled appointments with their own students.

Q: Are there tools that help instructors see how much time they are spending in the redesigned format versus in the traditional format?

A: NCAT developed the Scope of Effort Worksheet (see Appendix D) to help campuses document that the number of hours faculty devote to a redesigned course will be the same or fewer than those devoted to the traditional format of the course, even if class size increases or the number of sections that faculty carry increases. This is possible because the course redesign off-loads to the technology certain tasks like lecturing, grading, and monitoring student progress. Explaining how this occurs and documenting the changes by using the Scope of Effort Worksheet enable redesign leaders to help others on campus understand the benefits of redesign for both students and faculty.

<u>Faculty Training</u>

Q: How much training is needed for instructors?

A: Many institutions experience problems because they underestimate the degree of training—both initial and ongoing—that is required in order to implement their redesigns successfully. The new format inevitably requires very different kinds of interactions with students from those in the traditional teaching format. Developing a formal plan for initial and ongoing training of all personnel—rather than assuming they will pick up the new methods on their own—will go a long way to ensuring a successful redesign.

Instructors working in a redesigned setting for the first time need enough training to understand the new philosophy of teaching that is required, because a change in basic mind-set must take place. Some people embrace that change immediately; others may have to be dragged along. Here are some tips:

- Plan to get instructors involved as early as possible.
- Involve instructors in curricular decision making.
- Offer workshops with discussions and presentations.
- Bring in guests from other schools that have successfully implemented a course redesign that is similar in model or discipline.
- As the semester progresses, meet frequently with all instructors to offer ongoing training. Some institutions meet weekly; others meet on a less-regular basis.

Q: What should instructor training include?

A: The most important aspect of instructor training involves how to "teach" in the redesign, because the redesigned format may be very different from the teaching format the instructors have used and/or experienced in the past. Instructors need to be coached in ways to facilitate—and engage students in—problem solving rather than instructors' resorting to lecturing or providing answers for students. Training should include:

- A full explanation of the redesign model, including its rationale and benefits
- Clear guidelines on instructors' responsibilities under the new model
- How to use the instructional software and other online resources
- The importance of maintaining consistency in implementing all elements of the redesign

Q: How often do we need to train instructors?

A: The desire to go back to old ways of doing things has to be overcome. Ongoing mandatory training of instructors is the only way to ensure that success will be achieved. All personnel

need to be reminded of the policies and procedures and learn about changes in the software. We recommend holding a meeting with all experienced instructors at least once each semester to review old policies and point out any new ones.

As new faculty are brought into the course over time, it is important to help them go through the same steps of accepting a different learning model and to point out ways of creating the types of connections attributed to the traditional lecture format. We recommend conducting at the beginning of each semester a workshop for instructors new to redesign and then monitoring their work throughout their initial term of working under the redesigned model.

Q: How should we train adjunct faculty members?

A: In addition to involving adjuncts in instructor training sessions, full-time faculty need to mentor part-time faculty during the latter's initial term of working in the redesigned model. Although time-consuming, doing so will ensure greater consistency in the redesign. Mentoring is an investment that will ensure the continued success of the redesign.

Q: How do we ensure ongoing consistency among instructors?

A: Even when initial training is provided for all instructors, most institutions discover inconsistencies in application of the redesign, especially during the pilot period. For example, students may be required to complete guided-lecture notes before taking a quiz, but some instructors do not monitor guided-lecture-note completion. Despite policies against accessing external resources during class or lab, some instructors allow students to listen to music with headphones, check e-mail, or use non-course-related Web resources while in class. Despite policies to the contrary, some instructors permit use of notes on proctored exams.

The faculty need to formulate firm rules about such matters. Faculty need to adjust to the concept that they are not permitted to make decisions based on their individual interpretations; rather, all have to follow the same rules and guidelines. If an instructor has an idea for improving student learning and/or the process, the idea should be agreed upon and applied by all instructors. Because unforeseen issues arise regularly, weekly staff meetings are necessary— with results recorded, published, and distributed so that all faculty and staff can consistently implement the decisions. Although time-consuming, this investment ensures the continued success of redesign.

Faculty Resistance

Q: How can we overcome faculty resistance to the redesign?

A: There are a number of ways to overcome faculty resistance.

- *Persuade them.* Some faculty members are sincerely concerned that students cannot learn course content in the redesigned format. They have spent years lecturing, watching students do homework, and grading many, many papers. With greater exposure to situations in which the redesign is working, these sincere instructors will adapt to and embrace the more successful learning environment. The data demonstrating greater student success will persuade them, as will the assurances of their colleagues on campus and at other institutions who use the redesigned model.

- *Train them.* Instructors who want training are not confused. They recognize they are unfamiliar with software that will be used extensively in the redesign even if they have tried using it previously in one or two sections as homework assignments. They know they are accustomed to lecturing and that working with students in a different learning environment will require different approaches, and they seek assistance and training to learn the new methods. Other instructors who are new to using software and the redesign model also need training. Both types of instructors know they need greater understanding and practice prior to full implementation of the new model. They also want to understand and adhere to the new policies but need training to do so.

- *Mentor them.* As new faculty join the redesign after the initial pilot, they will undoubtedly have questions as the term proceeds. Their confidence will grow with experience, but they will benefit from having a specific person available to help them in dealing with students. Mentors should check in frequently to be sure that new faculty are adapting to the new approaches. Mentoring can occur between full-time faculty, but it is especially important that full-time faculty mentor adjunct faculty. At most institutions, adjuncts have been permitted to teach in whatever ways they wanted. The new and consistent redesigned course represents a significant change for part-time faculty. An adjunct who is supervising tutors will need guidance in this role because it is a new one for most. Adjuncts are frequently not on campus when most full-time faculty are. They may not be able to observe the redesign when it is being managed by full-time faculty. Having a full-time faculty mentor or an experienced adjunct mentor will be valuable for all, but particularly for those part-timers who teach in the evening or on weekends. Mentoring will assist adjuncts as they join the new model, and it will help overcome objections related to change.

- *Reassign them.* Some faculty may never see the benefits of the redesign for both students and faculty. They will refuse to change or they will cause major difficulties for the team and for the administration. Even when the results demonstrate that the redesign is leading to greater student learning and higher completion rates, some faculty will not agree to even try the new approach. Such faculty should be reassigned to other responsibilities in the institution if they are full-time, tenure-track employees. The preferences of individual faculty to continue teaching as they always have—even when students are not succeeding—cannot be tolerated by an institution that truly wants student learning and completion to improve.

- *Fire them.* Sad as it may sound, some faculty care more about getting to do whatever they want than about seeing students succeed. Adjunct faculty hired from term to term and others who are not tenured may need to seek employment elsewhere. Again, institutions seeking to provide learning environments in which students succeed must have faculty who share that goal and who demonstrate their shared agreement through their participation in the redesign model.

It is important to remind all faculty why the redesign was undertaken. Some may argue that the institution should return to the traditional, old way of offering the course, but they should be reminded that that would not improve the situation for students, because fixing the old way was the reason the redesign began. Faculty should be reminded of the successes other institutions have achieved and the benefits to faculty, such as working more closely with students who need their assistance and reducing the tedious task of grading.