



John Jay Teaching & Learning Center
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Dear Members of the City University of New York Board of Trustees,

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony.

At John Jay College of Criminal Justice, informal conversations with faculty and their new Teaching and Learning Center Director in the summer of 2016 revealed a faculty eager to explore, discuss, and transform their teaching. In response, the John Jay Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) at John Jay College of Criminal Justice has composed a threefold holistic approach to faculty development:

1. Training faculty in community and family trauma and resilience principles and practices relevant to our diverse students' identities and needs;
2. Grounding faculty in cognitive science-based learning principles and recommendations to frame critical thinking in structured course and assignment design; and
3. Working with faculty to enhance student capacities for academic and professional success and reflect inclusive language and strategies by embedding "soft skill" development in course activities and feedback.

Our common understanding is that the ethnic and racial diversity of John Jay's students, among the highest at CUNY, combined with the highest reported poverty levels across the university, demand these practical, contextual, and research-based responses to our students' interdependent communities and family systems and their paths towards their future careers, in which many will address the injustices they have lived in creating more humane and effective societies.

Overview

In July 2016, the John Jay Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) welcomed faculty with a strategic plan for a coordinated approach to faculty development, one that invited faculty, staff, and students to support and initiate overlapping learning communities to catalyze resilience and efficacy in teaching and learning at the college. Four years later, the TLC has introduced annual faculty seminars, workshops and conversation series, mini-grants, and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning recognition events. Alongside these activities, the TLC has reinvented the now semiannual Faculty Development Day conferences and the annual Distinguished Teaching Prize to be more inclusive and reflective of our student population. Notably, designating social justice as one of our strategic plan goals has created a reciprocal accountability, inspiring faculty teach-ins, HSI enhancement projects, and multiple racial justice events.

COVID-19 Pandemic

During the pandemic, the TLC immediately began to guide faculty through the remote transition. For example, from March 11-17, the TLC Director shared a seven-day plan for remodeling courses through the faculty email listservs with daily reminders and lists of next steps. In contrast to resilience projects based in positive psychology that have been prominent this past year and that emphasize individual approaches to increasing personal resilience, the TLC has continued a community-based approach, building shared skills and values with faculty and staff that could then be incorporated into assignment design and student feedback.

Impact:

Staffed by a full-time Director, part-time student support, and occasional faculty fellows assigned to single, short-term projects, the John Jay Teaching and Learning Center has grown from an empty space to a vital, recognized nexus of teaching, learning, mentoring, and social justice across the college. The TLC's influence is felt in the 203 faculty, staff, and students who participated in our virtual August 2020 Faculty Development Day and in the more than 2,300 faculty who have been reading and discussing the TLC Director's resilience and learning emails during the pandemic.

What may be most striking is the impact of our formal pedagogical trainings for faculty in terms of the numbers of courses and students from 2017-2020. During this time, more than 130 TLC-trained faculty have taught more than 1,400 courses with more than 31,000 "duplicated seats" (students may have taken more than one course from this faculty cohort). Full-time and part-time faculty are included in this group, representing nearly every academic department and program.

At the same time, the pandemic has given us ample evidence to support claims that we have reached **all** teaching faculty, potentially influencing **all courses taught and all students enrolled since Spring 2020**. Over seven months, the 31 emails from the TLC Director to the faculty listservs have offered targeted teaching advice on resilience and soft skills, earning praise from the Chairs' Council, the Faculty Senate, and individual faculty.

Forecast

Clearly, the pandemic challenges higher education to transform and align more effectively to student needs. In the next two years, the connections between resilience, learning, and career preparation (both in-person and virtual) will increasingly command attention. John Jay's Teaching and Learning Center anticipates these connections and will continue to guide and mentor faculty into the post-COVID-19 future.

Sincerely,

Gina Rae Foster

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Director, John Jay Teaching and Learning Center