



Amherst College

Center for Teaching & Learning

2017 - 2018 Annual Report



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Center for Teaching and Learning

The Fun **FACTS**

We engaged with 150 unique faculty and over 60 staff throughout the 2017 - 2018 academic year.

The faculty with whom we worked reflect the total faculty!

Total Amherst College Faculty by Rank (Snapshot, 2018)

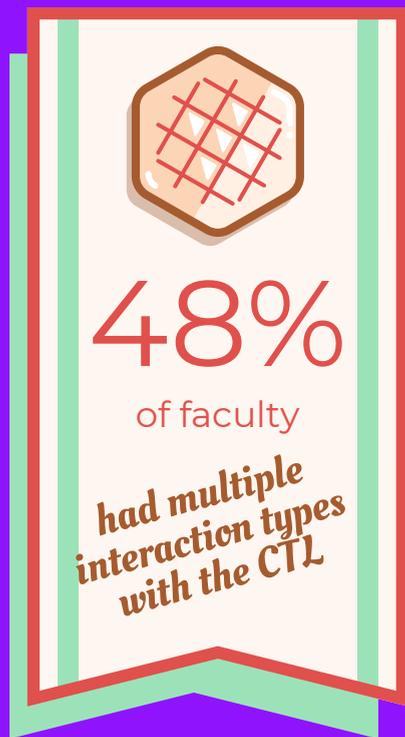


■ Visiting Faculty (15.33%) ■ Lecturer/Other Faculty (11.31%)
■ Assistant Professor (21.90%) ■ Associate Professor (10.95%)
■ Professor (40.51%)

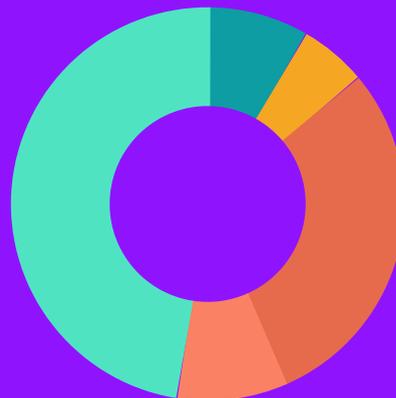
Total Faculty Served by the CTL



■ Visiting Faculty (15.15%) ■ Lecturer/Other Faculty (11.36%)
■ Assistant Professor (25.76%) ■ Associate Professor (7.58%)
■ Professor (40.15%)



Points of Contact



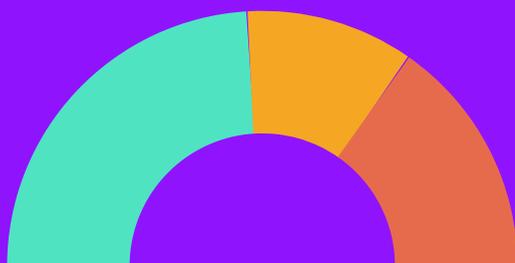
- Individual Consult Only (8.33%)
- Departmental Consult Only (5.30%)
- Dean's Retreat Only (29.55%)
- Programming Only (9.09%)
- Multiple Points of Contact (47.73%)

Individual Consultations



Riley worked individually with 40 faculty in over 60 consultations and worked with an additional 40 faculty through departmental consultations.

- Visiting Faculty (27.50%)
- Lecturer/Other Faculty (12.50%)
- Assistant Professor (30%)
- Associate Professor (10%)
- Professor (20%)



What did we cover in the individual consultations?

- Course Design (48%)
- Implementation (21.33%)
- Assessment (30.67%)

CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING STAFF

See the CTL [website](#) for more information about our staff, including our new Assistant Director Sarah Bunnell who started work July 9th, 2018.

 A portrait of Riley Caldwell-O'Keefe, Ph.D. She is a woman with short, light-colored hair, wearing a light pink button-down shirt. She is sitting at a wooden table with her hands clasped in front of her. To her left, there is a stack of books. The background is a solid orange color.	<p>Riley Caldwell-O'Keefe, Ph.D.</p> <p>Director</p> <p><i>Riley supports individual faculty and departments through course design, curricular initiatives and programming. She guides the strategic visioning in collaboration with the faculty director and is the point person for strategic implementation including the operations and programmatic functions of the CTL.</i></p>
 A portrait of Jyl Gentzler, Ph.D. She is a woman with short, light-colored hair, wearing a dark green button-down shirt. She is sitting at a wooden table with her hands clasped in front of her. The background is a solid orange color.	<p>Jyl Gentzler, Ph.D.</p> <p>Faculty Director</p> <p><i>Jyl primarily facilitates collaborative pedagogical opportunities including learning communities, reading groups, and seminars. She works with faculty to bring outside experts to campus and facilitates sharing their own pedagogical experiences with others.</i></p> <p><i>Note: Jyl is also the R. John Cooper '64 Presidential Teaching Professor of Philosophy and Faculty Director of the Writing Center</i></p>
 A portrait of Melissa Lowe. She is a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a black and white striped long-sleeved shirt. She is sitting at a wooden table with her hands clasped in front of her. A small dog is visible on the table to her left. The background is a solid orange color.	<p>Melissa Lowe</p> <p>Administrative Assistant</p> <p><i>Melissa provides support for the CTL including maintaining the book collection, web and print resource materials, and budget. She can set meetings for the Director and can provide guidance on available CTL resources and programming.</i></p>

The following work is in alphabetical order by program, responsibility or initiative name.

Consultations

Individual and department level pedagogical consultations are the primary work of the Center for Teaching and Learning.

Individual Consultations

We broadly categorize the individual consultations into three categories for the purposes of our better understanding faculty needs. These categories are loosely based upon the flow of course work - design, implementation, and assessment - since CTL responsibilities focus on teaching and learning. Riley's individual work with faculty ranged from short conversations or email exchanges about classroom management strategies to much more complex, multi-meeting course design consultations. The below examples are intended to elucidate the kinds of work accomplished with faculty without attempting to be comprehensive.

Course Design Consultation Examples

- Course Development in which a faculty member had a subject matter identified and, through a series of conversations and working sessions, we built the course learning outcomes, projects and assignments, some class activities and assessment strategies
- Syllabus revision to include fine-tuning course descriptions and learning outcomes as well as considering student work-load and course alignment
- Course revisions ranged from fine-tuning assignments, building project-based work, integrating more active learning strategies and developing effective peer and faculty feedback mechanisms

Implementation Examples

- Faculty members needed assistance with classroom dynamics. For example, within a short period of time, three faculty members were wanting to improve the interpersonal dynamics of classroom discussion and engagement. In each case the root cause was slightly different and so we developed a unique strategy for each specific course.
- Non-evaluative course observations in which faculty members received targeted feedback based on a conversation prior to the observation and debriefing after the observation with the goal of improving the teaching and learning experience

Assessment Examples

- Faculty members requested advice on or requested that the CTL conduct mid-term assessment in their courses

- Faculty members wanted to devise grading strategies in order to use their time more effectively and provide students productive feedback that would improve learning and success in the course
- Course evaluation consultations ranged from devising questions to interpreting and utilizing student feedback
- Developing rubrics to ensure course alignment between assignments and goals for the course as well as ensuring transparency of expectations for student success

Department Consultations

These conversations were primarily focused on one of two areas. The first is the \$1.5 million [Reimagining the Commons](#) grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to “adapt residential liberal arts education to a new population of students and changing circumstances.” The second area is focused on course evaluations and teaching effectiveness. Additionally, the CTL met with faculty candidates from several departments as part of the recruitment/interview process and contributed to Amherst’s NEASC reaccreditation process.

Reimagining the Common

There are four departments who received the grant within the last two years and are working at various stages of development on curriculum and course revision. These include Geology, Economics, Spanish, and Mathematics & Statistics. The CTL works closely with these departments on curricular mapping, departmental value and priority assessment, course and curricular revision planning, implementation, and assessment. The CTL has also worked closely with departments through the proposal process and continues to shepherd departments and faculty teams through the grant period with the expectation of two to five more departments or faculty teams receiving funding. This CTL course and curricular revision support is facilitated through close collaboration with the Amherst College Grants office which directs and manages the grant.

Teaching Effectiveness

Due to the work of the CTL around course evaluations and assessment of student learning, we were called in to consult regarding devising questions and developing more holistic approaches to defining and assessing teaching effectiveness. As noted above, the CTL worked with twelve departments who utilized the CTL designed course evaluation form and also consulted with an additional five departments and the first-year seminar committee.

Course Evaluation Pilot

The CTL created a course evaluation form designed to engender insightful, actionable feedback about students’ learning experience. We worked with over 30 faculty from twelve departments as well as with faculty teaching First-Year Seminars. We received over 1300 student responses during this course evaluation pilot project. The CTL worked with individual

faculty to customize the question set and then went into classrooms to talk with students about the importance of providing feedback regarding their learning experience and also help students better understand implicit bias and how to provide productive, actionable feedback. The CTL also proctored most of these course evaluations.

The CTL is currently analyzing this data and will continue serving in an advisory capacity regarding teaching effectiveness which may include developing an individual or departmental teaching assessment plan, conducting mid-term and other formative course assessment, designing questions sets, and interpreting and utilizing student feedback.

Dean's Retreat for Inclusive Pedagogies, [Disability and Accessibility](#)

Thursday, August 31st, Lord Jeffrey Inn, 9am – 4pm

130 faculty and instructional staff attended the program which included:

- Jeanne Kincaid, "Aligning Accessibility with Amherst's Mission of Diversity and Inclusion"
- Jodi Foley, "Accommodations at Amherst"
- Faculty Panel including Kristin Bumiller (Political Science), Sheila Jaswal (Chemistry), Chris Kingston (Economics), Rick Lopez (History)
- Sheryl Burgstahler, "Universal Design: Enhancing Excellence through Inclusion"
- Sheryl Burgstahler, "Getting Started: How to Implement Inclusive Practices in the Classroom"
- Teaching Resources at Amherst College, Resource Fair

Participants overwhelmingly found that the Dean's Retreat

- increased their understanding of the potential needs of students with disability (91%),
- increased their commitment to make their courses more accessible (91%) and,
- provided useful information and tools for teaching at Amherst College (95%).

End-of-year lunches for new and newly tenured faculty

In celebration of their work and in an effort to better understand faculty pedagogical needs, the CTL director and faculty director invited all new and newly tenured faculty to lunch. We held three lunches – two for new faculty and one for newly tenured faculty. The CTL hosted almost 20 faculty and enjoyed rich conversation about the joys and challenges of teaching at Amherst College.

Food for Thought Lunch Series

We offered five lunches during which faculty and instructional staff shared with participants the effective pedagogical work they have accomplished. The conversations were rich and productive.

- February 14th, “What does Being Human in STEM Mean? Student Documentary Screening and Panel,” Co-sponsored by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion
Faculty: Sheila Jaswal (Chemistry)
Instructional Staff: Megan Lyster (Center for Community Engagement)
- February 22nd, “How to Motivate Learning using Public Speaking in the Classroom: From Myth to Math”
Faculty: Sarah Olson (Classics) and (Nick Horton (Statistics)
Instructional Staff: Susan Daniels (Writing Center)
- March 21st, “Teaching with Things: The Pedagogical Benefits of Museum Class Sessions”
Faculty: Sarah Olson (Classics), Robert Hayashi (American Studies)
Instructional Staff: Keffie Feldman (Mead Art Museum)
- April 11th, “Setting Goals, Building Scaffolds, Meeting Students Where They Are: Departmentally-Integrated Curricular Reform in Geology”
Faculty: David Jones and Tekla Harms (Geology)
- April 25th, “Bridging Knowledge, Building Confidence: Scaffolding Large Writing Assignments”
Faculty: Hannah Holleman (Sociology), Rachel Levin (Biology)
Instructional Staff: Cassie Sanchez (Writing Center)

Overall, participants indicated that these pedagogical conversations provided new ideas and useful insights regarding their own teaching (4.4 out of a five point scale) and built their sense of Amherst College as a community of teaching practitioners (4.7).

Pair Programming Conversation

The CTL facilitated a [cross-disciplinary conversation](#) for faculty interested in exploring the pedagogical strategy of pair programming – the practice of having two or more students work together to code, program and learn on one computer.

Pedagogical Learning Circle

A group of faculty gathered to consider best practices for teaching world languages. The CTL is working with this team to assess the work.

Resource Support

The CTL receives requests from faculty and departments to provide resources on various pedagogical questions. We have compiled resource and research lists and recommendations on a variety of topics from pedagogical best practices for student response systems (clickers) to assessment strategies and approaches to syllabus design. You can find some of these resources on our [website](#).

STEM Pedagogy Workshops

In February, we offered pedagogical workshops facilitated by the four Assistant Director candidates during their on-campus visits in February.

- February 6th, "Helping Students Read Scientific Literature"
- February 8th, "Even Einstein Struggled: Re-Norming Student Perceptions of STEM Success"
- February 13th, "Engaging Students While Gauging Learning"
- February 15th, "Applying Learning Research to Course Design"

A total of 73 faculty and staff attended and their assessment indicated that the workshops provided many key take-aways which primarily focused on strategies they felt could be immediately implemented into the classroom. In this same assessment, the attendees noted that the workshops prompted an interest in working with the CTL both individually on their courses through assignments, syllabi, assessment as well as on department level initiatives.

This search, which included implicit bias training for the search committee and an intentional and extensive rubric guided feedback process, resulted in the successful hire of Dr. Sarah Bunnell who started with the CTL on July 9, 2018.

Training for Teaching Assistants in Quantitative Disciplines

The Moss Quantitative Center and several STEM faculty reached out to the CTL requesting support for TA training. In consultation with the Q Center board, we developed [a training](#) that we facilitated on September 24th, 2017. The Loeb Center for Career Exploration and Planning also participated through co-leading a session on inclusive classrooms. We worked with over 50 quantitative discipline teaching assistants from seven different departments.

The students participating indicated through an evaluation that the training increased their understanding of pedagogical frameworks relevant to their work, increased their commitment to using inclusive practices, and developed a sense of themselves as leaders.

Universal Design for Learning and Beyond

Six faculty from six different disciplines participated in an intensive course design seminar during Spring 2018. The seminar offered faculty research, resources, and structured time to work on designing a course in their discipline. [The seminar](#) was built around three pedagogical frameworks – Dee Fink’s backward design principles, Joan Middendorf and Leah Shopkow’s *Overcoming Student Learning Bottlenecks* (2017) and Universal Design principles. The goal of using this combination of approaches and framing was to allow faculty to reflect on and create pathways for all of their students to become intrinsically motivated disciplinary experts. Faculty participants are teaching the courses either Fall 2018 or Spring 2019 and, after completing their semester, will produce a reflection of their teaching and students’ learning experience in the course.

COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

Being Human in STEM (HSTEM)

This partnership with STEM faculty, with Professor Sheila Jaswal as the lead, and Instructional Designer Megan Lyster involved providing resources and advice on inclusive pedagogical strategies including best practices for team development and community building. Riley conducted and provided leadership around assessment of these teaching practices, worked closely with student teams in the HSTEM course to develop research questions and methodologies as well as edited and contributed to the inclusive pedagogies handbook which was primarily produced by HSTEM students.

Educational Studies Program Initiative

The CTL served on a committee of advisors and collaborators who developed a proposal for an educational studies program at Amherst College.

English Capstone Workshops and Symposium

The CTL worked in collaboration with Professor Lisa Brooks and Research and Instruction Librarian Missy Roser to develop a series of workshops to support seniors graduating with a degree in English. Riley provided key ideation around frameworks and sequencing of the workshops as well as co-leading several of the workshops which supported students as they developed a presentation of their work for the culminating symposium.

First Year Seminar Workshop

The CTL provided some advisory support for this all-day May workshop for faculty teaching first-year seminars. We also partnered with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to offer a session on inclusive teaching practices during the workshop.

Project-Based Learning Collaboration

The CTL partnered with instructional staff from the Center for Community Engagement, Research & Instruction Librarians, and the Writing Center to attend a project-based learning conference and then we developed and facilitated an interactive session with ten faculty who use this pedagogical approach with one or more of these courses. The objective of this session was to better understand the ways that faculty at Amherst College understand and accomplish project-based work and how instructional staff can better support their teaching.

Promoting Persistence in STEM

Partnership with the Chemistry Department to bring Dr. Alegra Eroy-Reveles for a series of workshops and conversations.

- March 29th, Stereotype Threat: How can We Reduce the Threat in the Air?
- March 30th, Classroom Writing Exercises to Promote Motivation and Persistence of STEM Students

Science Center and Classroom Working Group

The CTL served in an advisory capacity for classroom furniture and finishing designs. We provided research and recommendations on making a STEM building and classrooms inclusive. The CTL also served on a temporary classroom working group to provide pedagogical considerations for campus-wide renovation and development prioritization.

Additional Collaborations

The CTL works closely with many individuals, departments and offices including the Math Fellows with Professor David Cox, Dean's Office for new faculty support, Educational Studies Program working group, Institutional Research, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Center for Community Engagement, Research and Instruction Librarians, Admissions and the Mead Art Museum among others.

Presentations, Scholarship and Professional Development

Riley Caldwell-O'Keefe

"Using Student Perception Research to Inform Educational Development Work," The International Consortium for Educational Development Conference, June 2018.

"Defining Faculty Success to Support Strategic Planning and Evidence Value," Professional and Organizational Development Annual Conference, November 2017, Co-presenters: Carol Hurney, Colby College and Douglas Harrison, University of Maryland University College

Assessment Leadership Workshop, Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education, June 2017

Jyl Gentzler

Presentation of "Experiments in Pedagogy: Discussing Discussion," at Lightning Talks about Educational Development at Small Colleges, POD, Montreal 2017.

Riley Caldwell-O'Keefe and Jyl Gentzler

"Inclusive Pedagogy at Amherst College," Invited speakers at the Dialogue on Inclusive Pedagogies for the Liberal Arts. Haverford College. March 2018.

Facilitative Leadership for Social Change, Two-day leadership training, September 2017

Service

Riley Caldwell-O'Keefe

Amherst College

- Search Committee, Director Academic Technology Services
- Sexuality, Women's & Gender Studies, Amherst College. Stonewall Award Reviewer. 2018

Smith College

Consultant for department level conversations about defining teaching effectiveness

Professional and Organizational Development (POD)

- Diversity Committee Co-Chair, 2018 - Present
- Proposal Reviewer, 2017 - Present
- Inclusion Coordinator, 2017
- Diversity Committee Conference Coordinator, 2015 – 2017

International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED)

- Proposal Reviewer, 2018

Riley Caldwell-O'Keefe and Jyl Gentzler

Pedagogical Consultants for Vassar College as part of their Engaged Pluralism Initiative