

**Center for Instructional
Development and Research**

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“My teaching improved and I began to enjoy it more.”

What Faculty and TAs Say About the Value of Consulting with CIDR

CIDR consults with hundreds of faculty and TAs every year on questions related to teaching and learning. To help us assess the value of our consulting, we recently surveyed a sample of faculty, TAs, and former TAs who had worked with CIDR during the preceding five years. We received 170 replies from individuals in sixty UW departments, and their most frequent suggestion was that our work should be more widely known. In response to this suggestion, this issue of the Bulletin highlights the primary benefits of consulting with CIDR that were identified by faculty and TAs who responded to the survey.

PRACTICAL INPUT ON TEACHING

The most frequent benefit identified by faculty and TAs was getting practical input on questions or strategies related to teaching.

“I rethought my assignments to make them both more challenging for the students and also less time consuming for me to grade.”

“CIDR helped tremendously when I needed to convert my small-class teaching style to serve the needs of a large lecture class – assignment design, syllabus design, articulation of learning goals, test design [and] ideas for making a large lecture (100+) class interactive with opportunities for active student participation.”

“When I came up with ideas for different classroom strategies or when I was trying to incorporate a new strategy, the people at CIDR ... helped me modify something new to fit my teaching strengths.”

LEARNING WHAT HAPPENS IN OTHER CLASSES

One of the most highly valued benefits that many faculty and TAs reported was the chance to learn from CIDR consultants what other instructors were doing in their courses.

“It was great to talk with someone who’d visited lots of different classes and seen how they worked or didn’t work. It made me feel less alone in some of the problems I was having, and also helped me work to improve my teaching.”

“Having CIDR experts share the depth of their expertise and their knowledge of what other instructors and programs have done successfully in the past. The CIDR consultants listen to individual instructors’ needs and adapt solutions accordingly, i.e. we don’t simply get a ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution.”

“Since they had worked with people in my field before, they knew what common problems were and ... more importantly, they were able to tell me what people in other fields were doing in their classes and how their experiences could help me.”

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Information for People who Teach
at the University of Washington



DIALOGUE AND COMMUNITY

A number of survey respondents also reported that they valued CIDR as a point of contact for interaction with the UW teaching community.

"CIDR has shown me that we have a culture of dedicated instructors here ... who are interested in having students learn and in researching ways to improve student learning."

"I think the main positive is that I could bounce ideas off of knowledgeable individuals who could also give me an idea of what is done in other courses. It is wonderful to have this resource of information so you don't feel alone in the sea of teaching!"

"I benefited from the sense that I was not teaching 'in isolation' and that I was part of a larger community that cared about what was going on in the classroom."

TIME, ENERGY, AND NEW IDEAS

For some instructors, the primary benefit of working with CIDR came in the form of renewed energy and ideas that helped them make best use of their time.

"I don't think [other] faculty always know just how much benefit can come from talking to a consultant at CIDR. A little bit of time with a consultant saves enormous time/energy/sometimes misery(!) later."

"New ideas for lectures, resources to improve style and efficiency for teaching, seeing teaching not as a burden that takes away from research."

"The primary benefit ... was working with individuals who were also excited and informed about teaching. CIDR is an oasis to which I would go to get refreshed."

FINDING JOY AND CONFIDENCE IN TEACHING

Finally, a number of instructors credited CIDR with helping them find greater enthusiasm for their teaching.

"CIDR has increased my confidence in the classroom. As a result, I have also come to really enjoy teaching ... I will focus on research in my career, but to me it is essential to also be a good educator."

"Consulting with CIDR made me realize that - regardless of what research and writing I do - my time in front of a class is a large part of my academic experience and, in order to fully enjoy that time, I can focus on the joy of sharing ideas with my students."

"Staff at CIDR ... seemed to have great confidence that I could be a good teacher, so I believed them!"

We can't say that everyone who consults with CIDR experiences all these benefits, but it is clear that many at UW have found CIDR to be a valuable resource for making teaching a rewarding component of their academic life. For more information about consulting at CIDR, see <http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/consulting/>. To arrange an appointment with a CIDR consultant, call 543-6588 or send a message to cidr@u.washington.edu.

For a more complete discussion of survey methods, responses, and analysis, see Jacobson, W., Wulff, D., Grooters, S., Edwards, P., & Freisem, K. (2008). Reported Long-Term Value and Effects of Teaching Center Consultations. *To Improve the Academy*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.



Center for Instructional Development and Research

CIDR promotes excellence in teaching and learning at the University of Washington through its work with individual faculty and TAs, departments, campus-wide initiatives, and University leaders. CIDR staff are available year-round to collaborate on the design, implementation, and assessment of ways to advance teaching and learning for all students in the diverse UW community. Consultations are confidential and offered at no charge to UW faculty, TAs, and departments.

If you have questions about teaching and learning, or you would like to find out more about working with CIDR, you can call us at 543-6588, send a message to cidr@u.washington.edu, or visit our web site:

<http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/>



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