

NEW CHALK TALK

CLT is Celebrating 15 Years of Promoting Excellence in Teaching and Learning

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This year we are celebrating a major milestone at our Center for Learning and Teaching (CLT) — September 2017 marks our 15th anniversary. It also marks the 15th anniversary of our newsletter, New Chalk Talk. Of all the numerous activities of our center, it seems befitting to start our celebration with the [publication of this](#) collection of 150 issues of New Chalk Talk.

When CLT was established in 2002, we were only three people working at the center: an administrative assistant, a young AUC graduate interested in developing instructional materials, and myself. With this small staff, a bi-weekly newsletter seemed to be the most efficient way of reaching out to as many faculty as possible to introduce CLT and its *raison d'être*, and to start a conversation on campus about issues of pedagogy, the role of technology in higher education, and assessment and learning.

The immediate feedback of AUC faculty was very positive, and early comments captured the goal of the newsletter well. One instructor wrote, “Today I started a “Chalk Talk” file. The format is great: clear, simple and readable for academics on the run. Bravo.” (D. Blanks, email Sept. 24, 2002). Another noted, “Thank you for creating the very illuminating (and fun to read) newsletter, “Chalk Talk.” (A. Elshimi, email Dec.24, 2002).

Three months after the launch of the newsletter, we knew we had a successful formula which needed to be sustained. We encouraged faculty to share some of their experiences, thoughts, experimentation, methodologies, and/or interesting insights with the community. Many did, and these are included in this [publication](#).

From its founding, CLT sought to address issues of faculty development that teaching centers in the US and Canada were dealing with; namely integrating active learning strategies and technology into traditional teaching and learning settings, supporting formative assessment and offering course design and redesign consultations.

In 2002, preliminary talks with faculty showed that their main concern was the time needed to learn and use new technologies. CLT responded by launching the Student Technology Assistant (STA) program, modeled after similar programs in the U.S. STAs are students, trained by CLT staff to assist faculty members in the appropriate use of technology in their courses, which included anything from the effective use of the learning management system (Blackboard or Moodle) to exploration of video capture, student response systems, and web 2.0 technologies such as blogs, wikis and e-portfolios. The satisfaction rate of faculty with the STA program has consistently been high, mostly because of its one-on-one nature, which takes place at the professors' own pace and based on their personal schedules.

Over time, we experimented with different approaches to delivering programs and services to faculty. Beyond the newsletter and the STAs, faculty development workshops and individual consultations were an important vehicle for encouraging reflective and innovative teaching, as was receiving formative student feedback on teaching through mid-semester surveys and small group instructional diagnoses (SGIDs). Additionally, CLT was involved in some institutional assessments such as assessment of the English Language Instruction program, the new Rhetoric and Composition/Core curriculum tandem courses, and a recent assessment of the Business School's large lecture classes. Annual symposia, where faculty members had the opportunity to showcase

their innovative practices and/or classroom action research, were one more venue for disseminating pedagogical innovations and creating opportunities for collaboration.

Over the years, we hosted a number of interesting and inspiring teachers and educators, who facilitated workshops and consulted with our faculty. These included Mary Deane Sorcinelli, Associate Provost for Faculty Development, UMass; the late Frank Moretti, founding Director of the Columbia Center for New Media Teaching and Learning (CCNMTL); Joan K. Lippincott, Associate Executive Director of the Coalition for Networked Information; Eric Mazur, physicist and educator at Harvard University; Charles Graham, Professor of Instructional Psychology and Technology ; Jon Nixon, philosopher, educator and Honorary Professor, Education University of Hong Kong; David Helfland, astronomer and educator, Columbia University; and more.

We have also held many international conferences and events, the most recent being the 4-day Digital Pedagogy Lab Cairo (March 2016) facilitated by some of the leading and most compelling voices in the field; the first Digital Humanities event ever held in Egypt (September, 2015), and the 2-day Problem Based Learning Institute (April 2017) for our faculty, facilitated by D. Allen and M. Serva from the University of Delaware's Institute for Transforming Undergraduate Education.

In 2015, the Senate and the Dean of Graduate Studies recommended that CLT develop a compulsory training program for all Teaching Assistants (TAs). Today, this program offers professional development opportunities to both TAs and graduate students beyond their academic studies.

CLT's programs continued to grow to include a required professional development Teaching Enhancement Certificate for adjunct faculty and new faculty, a six-week blended learning certificate program for faculty interested in teaching in this modality, and instructional design support for blended learning courses as well as MOOCs in the Arabic language. To encourage more faculty participation, CLT also offered professional development certificate "tracks" with five different themes: Active Learning, Web-Enhanced Learning, Assessment, Course Design, and Community- Based Learning.

Today, one of the major initiatives that CLT is involved in is AUC's Digital Education Initiative. CLT is leading and supporting AUC's web-enhanced, blended and (proposed) online initiative including MOOCs and Al-Ghurair Foundation/MIT capacity-building program promoting blended and online learning in the Arab region. This requires the establishment of a digital education unit within CLT that is accountable for assessment, implementation process, and operational support of these projects.

Last but not least, one of CLT's distinguishing features is the continuous professional development of our staff through conference travel, workshops, in-house professional development and mentoring, enabling them to develop expertise in student-centered learning, assessment, classroom action research, and to support faculty in the thoughtful integration of technology to achieve pedagogical goals.

I would like to end by thanking my former manager, Dean Shahira el Sawy, whose continuous support in building CLT and in helping make it what it is today, was invaluable. I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize the many contributions of our dear departed Dr. Pandeli Glavanis, with whom I worked closely for ten years to realize the mission of the CLT.

In marking our 15th Anniversary, CLT has enjoyed many successful years and we look forward to many more to come.



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