

21 July 2016

National Defense University President 20 July 2016 Memorandum, Major Program/Budget Decisions for Fiscal Years 2018-2022, requires the Provost to create a Learning and Technology Center concept/model to fully support the NDU student, faculty and staff lifecycle. The purpose of this paper is to outline the concept and need for a Learning and Technology Center at National Defense University.

The primary purposes of the Center are to ensure the best possible student experience and support the Middle States Commission Standards III and IV (Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience and Support of the Student Experience). Both of these standards are directly related to the idea of a Learning and Technology Center. Faculty will also benefit through the resources offered at the Center, and it will allow faculty members to focus on teaching, curriculum development and student advising. A final purpose of having a Center is institutional improvement of the University. To accomplish this, the Center will provide resources and services to maximize the potential of all NDU faculty, create the foundation for academic programs that can evolve into the future, and meet expectations of students. These resources and services will have a positive impact on student outcomes and allow NDU to achieve its vision to be the premier national security institution focused on advanced joint education, leader development and scholarship.

There are three dynamics that currently present challenges to the faculty.

1. Less than half of the NDU faculty are Title 10. The majority (58%) are “borrowed” from agencies and the military services, creating a population of faculty members who spend only one to three years at NDU. Title 10 faculty have the background, skillset, and responsibility for both curriculum development and faculty development of the “borrowed” faculty. Other than current Title 10 faculty spending less time with students to develop new faculty, there is no central development program that would allow a more timely assimilation of new faculty.
2. One of the MSCHE’s requirements for affiliation is “rigor in the student learning programs.” To that end, the University has championed an increase in writing requirements. Faculty devoting time to teaching basic writing skills detracts from the student experience. The faculty should be focused on the concepts of the written work as well as the delivery of well thought out curriculum and continuous feedback. The full effective utilization of a Learning and Technology Center will save time, allowing faculty to more efficiently execute required duties.
3. Academic technology has been rapidly changing. Faculty have little time to invest in exploring technologies which may contribute to the student’s learning experience, and demographics of our faculty highlight the challenge. An increasing number of students are “digital natives” – born after 1980. Less than 10% of the faculty are digital natives, and 67% of the faculty are over 50 years old. Digital natives were educated in an environment where personal computers, the World Wide Web, and collaborative distance learning platforms were common place. Many of our students earned online degrees. To offset challenges our demographics may introduce, we can embrace the expertise of

21 July 2016

instructional designers, librarians, and CASL (our resident wargaming expertise) to fill gaps in our portfolios. This will help faculty to focus on their most important contributions to the student experience: advising students, course content, curriculum development, and delivery. These partnerships will ultimately breed success for the student experience.

The imminent danger to the current way of doing business is that faculty have little time to stay relevant. Their most precious resource is time. To help rectify these challenges a Learning and Technology Center is proposed. It would consist of four elements.

1. Communications. NDU's mission is leader development. Leaders must be good communicators. Improving communication skills will be addressed through two sub-elements: writing and speaking. Students, staff and faculty could take advantage of services to improve communications when offered at the Center.

The goal of the writing sub-element would be to allow faculty to focus on the content of student papers and assessment; basic writing skills would be developed by the writing center professionals. Last summer, focus sessions were held with first year faculty members from each College. For the three Colleges that did not have professional writing assistance, they unanimously (**every** first year faculty member) felt they spent far too much time on basic writing proficiency. The two Colleges that contracted writing specialists did not have that challenge, and their faculty were free to focus on the content.

Additionally, there was an OSD-led examination of rigor within professional military education last summer. It became clear that a fundamental requirement for NDU graduates is that they write well. Funding that currently buys contract writing specialists should be redirected toward a permanent writing specialist capability accessible to all NDU students and faculty.

A second function of the communications sub-element should be to develop students' speaking skills. Faculty currently do not have the time to work one-on-one with students in this area. Solutions range from having the capability to record a student or faculty presentation for professional assessment and feedback at a later date to having a presentation critiqued live. A small investment would provide this capability.

2. Reading. Reading requirements for our academic programs are vast, and reading requirements for senior leaders are substantial as well. The Learning Center at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College reports a very high demand and success with assisting students to develop reading skills. They do this through software programs; the same software programs currently exist at NDU. We have already made this investment, but now we need to ensure students know about this resource and effectively manage the program (i.e. planning and assessing use of the resources, update of the software and modernizing the program as required).
3. Faculty Development. Faculty development is critical to our success. NDU currently has at least five different approaches to developing new faculty. As part of a two week

21 July 2016

program for new faculty, one College spends an hour and half reviewing the important NDU academic policies: Academic Freedom, Non-Attribution, Grading, Institutional Review Board, Student Code of Conduct, Academic Integrity, Academic Titles and Promotion. Another College allocates 20 minutes for a similar review while the remaining three Colleges cover material less formally and unilaterally. One problem with the current approach is not all faculty arrive during the summer. Through talent management, we are hiring more junior faculty (at the Assistant and Associate Professor level); therefore, we need to invest more in their development. There also is a need for “refresher” sessions. We all benefit from someone observing us or providing workshops that help us keep up to date with the rest of higher education. College faculty do not have the time to run initial faculty development sessions more than once a year nor conduct refresher sessions.

A faculty development model that would serve NDU well is one where new instructors are taught to be NDU faculty first and then content specifics for each course would come from the Colleges. This teaching model would be run by faculty skilled in teaching teachers to teach. These professionals would be exceptionally experienced and up-to-date. With a dedicated team developing faculty, faculty development periods could be scheduled throughout the year, with intensive faculty development periods scheduled during intersession periods. The master educators in the center would also conduct peer coaching.

During a recent PAJE at the Army Command and General Staff College, experienced faculty members unanimously praised the value of their centralized faculty development division. The indicated that, as a result of its use, they were better instructors and had more time to devote to teaching, scholarship, and research. A University faculty development team would improve the skills of our faculty and take the burden off of faculty to develop other faculty. The University will be constantly improving.

4. Academic Technology. As the leading institution for Joint Professional Military Education, the National Defense University (NDU) has a great opportunity to redesign and re-envision the role of academic technology in enhancing student learning and faculty research in military education. We have to be cautious on how we accomplish this redesign. Educational outcomes must always be the driving force. Technology is a tool which may enable us to achieve pedagogical improvements. Our mandate is to adapt the right technologies and use them in the most effective way. The selection and use of technology must be as a result of a careful needs assessment of academic requirements.

The opportunity to appropriately use academic technology can position NDU to excel even in an era of tight budgets that have imposed steep institutional hurdles on NDU. The 2015 Careerstone report states the case well: A robust academic technology environment at NDU has the potential to transform NDU’s operations, instruction, collaboration, and research capabilities. Such a transformation would benefit students, faculty, staff, and the University in general. Some of the benefits of properly applied academic technology that the Careerstone Team identified through primary and secondary research include:

21 July 2016

Benefits for Students

1. Access to technologies that enhance both on- and off-campus learning through more interactive, creative, and networked learning opportunities.
2. The capacity to incorporate social and mobile learning resources that today's students expect in a world of constant interaction and communication.
3. Access to technology platforms and tools that offer learning opportunities anytime, anywhere.
4. Expertise and familiarity with technologies directly relevant to their future professions and 21st-century JPME best practices.
5. Opportunities for non-native English speakers to develop English language proficiency in digital learning environments.

Benefits for Faculty and Staff

1. Opportunities to create learning experiences that enhance both on- and off-campus learning through more interactive, creative, and networked learning communities.
2. Access to a range of data analytics that can be used to tailor instructional approaches.
3. Access to centralized data that can be used to provide metrics and insight into current and past student cohorts.
4. Access to resources for subject-based content.
5. Access to professional development and support resources that permit experimentation with new technologies that enhance research, learning, and collaboration.
6. Recognition of teaching excellence through reward and recognition programs that value how academic technology innovation contributes to the University's strategic priorities.

Benefits to the University

1. Ensuring that NDU's educational model is flexible and can adapt to a world where the pace of academic technology and innovation will continue to accelerate in the future.
2. Enhancing teaching and scholarship through high-quality, technologically savvy curricula that will attract the best leaders, students, faculty, and researchers.
3. Maximizing the benefits of emerging practices that are transforming education by enabling real-time student and faculty feedback.
4. Supplying a robust infrastructure to facilitate student, faculty, and scholarly collaborations that encourage innovation through strategic partnerships and alliances that will enable NDU-wide success in a competitive global environment.
5. Enriching NDU's reputation by offering a rich on-campus experience supplemented by cutting-edge digital technologies.

These are challenging times for the National Defense University. But challenges present great opportunities. Creating a Learning and Technology Center provides us with the opportunity to work together on an innovative project that will not only solve many of our current problems but allow us to embrace the future and create a better, stronger, NDU – one that is fully prepared to execute its mission to a high degree of excellence. We will make better use of our resources – both fiscal and human - while delivering a top-notch student and faculty experience would be expected from the nation's premier national security institution.