Case Study & Analysis:

The Center for the Improvement of Teaching

University of Massachusetts, Boston

Group Seven
Tamara Backer, Jane Chang, Amanda Crawford, Teresa Ferraguto, Denise Tioseco, & Nicole Woodson
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SITE DESCRIPTION

The University of Massachusetts, Boston (UMB), is a unique organization in the world of higher education. It was founded in 1964 to provide opportunity for superior undergraduate and graduate education at moderate cost to the people of the state, especially those from the greater Boston area. The university serves more than 13,000 students on its own campus and more than 57,000 students through the University of Massachusetts inter-university system. The goals of the program are: academic excellence, diversity, and community service. These initiatives, as well as location, reasonable cost, and a strong faculty commitment, make the school a popular choice for many residents.

UMB relies heavily on the energy, commitment, and intellectual capacity of the faculty. These are individuals who are deeply concerned about their subjects, conducting new research, participating in community service, and interacting with the public and students at all levels. This paper will examine one of the faculty-governed committees that helps build a positive environment for professional and faculty development. The Center for the Improvement of Teaching (CIT) encourages collegiality and is committed to promoting high quality, inclusive education responding to the needs of the students.

HISTORY OF CIT

CIT was established in 1983 by Professors Rus Hart and James Broderick, with funding from the Ford Foundation. The initial goal was to improve “the quality of teaching within the College of Arts and Sciences by drawing on the skills and wisdom of UMB’s faculty rather than outside experts”. Six years later, Esther Kingston-Mann became CIT director and initiated an expansion of the Center's activities to the university as a whole, placing a particular emphasis on issues of diversity and inclusion. As one professor put it: “I use to avoid students in my class by lecturing the entire class and lecturing above their heads. I knew they were bored and disconnected from the class” (Suzanne Benally Report). In response to the disconnect that occurred between professors and students resulting from the diversity of backgrounds, CIT was created to focus on developing a space for common dialogue concerning issues on inclusive teaching and learning between faculty and students.
order to achieve its goals, CIT organizes events such as faculty development seminars, public forums, student/faculty dialogues and conferences, and faculty peer mentoring. In this way, CIT is able to build strong networks of support and help to promote curriculum transformation.

It is important to understand the demographics of Boston as well as the community at UMB in order to fully understand the need for CIT and to appreciate their achievements. Diversity is an issue which can no longer be ignored, especially at a school like UMB. The city of Boston is rich, but incredibly fragmented and unevenly distributed in terms of educational opportunities. UMB’s student population is more varied than any other higher education institution in New England. In 1998, 50% of the students were students of color, 53% were women, and 60% were the first in their family to go to college. The majority of students at the university are local residents who work, commute to campus, and possibly raise families. There are over 400 students with disabilities and the average age of a UMB student is twenty-nine (Kingston-Mann & Sieber, 2001, p. 7). These differences in race, background, age, and family situation clearly illustrate the need for the university to address diversity in its teaching and learning.

In their recent book Achieving against the Odds, Esther Kingston-Mann and Tim Sieber (2001), along with several colleagues, illustrate various issues that many UMB professors encounter in the classroom. The book describes how professors have been able to overcome the challenges they face by restructuring their curriculum and classroom to create an environment conducive to teaching and learning. “What are referred to in the literature as ‘teachable moments’ teach us [the faculty] as much as they teach our students” (Kingston-Mann & Sieber, 2001, p.14).

THE BOARD – PLAYERS IN THE CASE

CIT has a strong board made up of dedicated professors who are committed to sharing and learning as part of professional and personal development. The Board is voluntary and many of the faculty members donate a large amount of time, not only because they love their subject matter, but also because they truly care about the success of their students and realize the critical need for collaborative teaching/learning. Currently comprised of fourteen members, the Board consist of twelve professors and two students.
Vivian Zamel is the current Director and has taken over for Esther Kingston-Mann, the visionary of the group for many years. Although Esther was the director for eight years, there have been several interim directors over the past couple of years. Estelle Disch and Cass Turner have both taken turns at directing. Tim Sieber, Estelle, Cass, Vivian, and especially Esther have all been instrumental to the success of this program. These people possess various strengths and leadership styles which has kept the group dynamic and diverse. The disciplines that the Board Members come from represent some unusual cross-disciplinary collaborations throughout various academic departments, however, most are from Social Sciences and Humanities. One faculty is from the Nursing Department. They have similar views about the need for pedagogical sharing and professional growth, but agree that there are different ways of getting there. Their commitment to CIT and to each other over the years has helped to maintain stability and focus toward the greater goal of expanding CIT.

Other professors, such as Lin Zhan, have been major players in the Diversity Research Initiative and have helped to examine the needs of the students, emphasizing how student involvement can be beneficial to the program. All of these professors have played a critical role to our understanding of CIT. It is easy to see that although they are all in different departments and are passionate about different subject matter, they are drawn together by a greater need to learn from each other and grow individually, as an organization, and as an educational institution. Over the past few weeks, we have gathered information through site visits, basic research, and interviews with Kingston-Mann, Zamel, Seiber, Turner, and Zahn. These individuals have invested an amazing amount of time and energy in CIT and are the soul of the organization (along with other committed faculty whom we did not have the opportunity to meet). Sieber talks about his colleagues, members of CIT, and smiles, stating, “These are people who genuinely care about their students and each other” (Interview with Sieber). All of the members have a certain calm and confident look on their faces as they talk about each other. They know that what they are doing is more than a personal or a CIT agenda. It is a moral obligation to which they are committed for the long haul. The members enjoy the camaraderie, collegiality, friendship, and the overall feeling of community that is missing in so many academic settings.
today. In a world consumed by technology and the pressures of rampant capitalism, it is refreshing to work with a group of people who promote such altruism and egalitarianism.

**SUCCESSES & CHALLENGES OF CIT**

There have been many successes of CIT, particularly the number of faculty who have participated in the semester-long training seminars. Over 200 faculty from every college have participated and have begun to incorporate the ideas they have learned from the seminars into their curriculum. Sieber illustrates the success of these seminars as he describes the first one he attended and his subsequent trial- and-error implementation of new and innovative classroom teaching. He also mentions the campus-wide, CIT-led student/faculty/staff diversity curriculum initiative developed in 1989. This is a benchmark for CIT; the first real glimpse at the CIT’s potential toward university expansion. The forums, panels, and research initiatives have created ongoing dialogues about pedagogical issues concerning diversity that are publicized in the CIT Newsletter: **Building Connections.**

Even though all of these are examples of success and progress, there are concerns that linger. The first challenge is that CIT has had difficulty in recruiting professors from the sciences, which presents an obstacle to true campus-wide expansion. The center relies on publications and word of mouth to attract new participants. Although faculty are encouraged to participate in the trainings and other activities, and receive credits for “committee participation,” too many remain disconnected and apathetic about examining their teaching styles. Diversity is an incredibly complex issue and challenges will always exist as the environment changes. For this reason, CIT aims to help teachers from all disciplines to engage in innovative and effective pedagogy in order to respond to the ever-changing study body. Only when professors truly relate to and understand their students, can they be effective teachers. If CIT is to truly span all disciplines of UMB, it must find a way to get more faculty from different schools to invest in the program.

The second major challenge for CIT is student involvement. During our site visits, we spoke with several students. All are aware of the diversity on campus, but not many know about CIT and their goals. One student stated, “I enjoy the diversity, the ethnicities, the variety of lifestyles, and the age range at U-
Mass Boston. The distribution requirement is a pain though. I’ve heard of CIT, but I don’t know what they do.” Professor Lin Zhan has focused some of her research on the impact of classroom environment on LEP students in the Nursing Program. As a result of the positive impact the professor/student research has provided, CIT has taken further steps to recruit more students. Students are now members of the CIT Advisory Board, and contribute to the CIT newsletter. CIT must continue to create space for this sort of dialogue at university events.

In terms of the structure of CIT, policy decisions are made by a CIT Advisory Board of ten faculty members and two students. Currently, over 50% of the faculty board members are people of color, and two are part-timers. In order to serve on the Board, faculty must be veterans of at least one CIT seminar, and active participants in CIT forums and workshops. Veterans of the CIT seminars now chair almost every key committee in the university, including Faculty Council, General Education program, academic affairs committee, and diversity requirement implementation committee. Several CIT seminar veterans have served as Associate Provosts in the Office of Academic Affairs. They are contributors to two publications on teaching (1999 & 2001). The latter is the first book about teaching ever published by national press that is authored by non-Ed.D. faculty at a single academic institution. While initially funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation for its creation, CIT’s success has prompted university yearly funding to create a director position and a secretary. In 1991, the university began funding an assistant director’s position. When the Ford grant expired, the Deans and the Provost’s office supported the faculty course load reductions for participation in CIT seminars. Support from the Deans and Provost came as a result of recognition of improvement in teaching effectiveness of seminar participants.

**QUESTIONS FOR THE CASE**

The seeds for expansion are there, but there is still work to be done in CIT. The questions concern: (a) transitional/solid leadership, (b) appropriate structure, and (c) attaining the goal of expansion. How can the group increase participation and support at all levels and departments, including those that are resistant such as in the sciences? How can they make CIT sustainable? Currently, CIT has little structure or policies.
It has been able to exist without them because of the energy, enthusiasm and genuine commitment of their past leadership and current membership. However, we wonder if there must be a stronger structure and policies put into place in order for the program to be able to continue without completely relying on the Board members and especially Kingston-Mann. From the moment Kingston-Mann took on the Directorship, the initiative had a driving force behind it. As she begins to back away from a leadership position, what will the new director and Board members need to do to be sure that the dynamic energy that Kingston-Mann has provided is not lost? How can the Board make a smooth transition and maybe even create a different energy that will help to promote a true campus-wide reform? What is an appropriate structure for such a free and open group like CIT, and what types of policies would allow for the flexibility needed to address a complex issue like diversity.

**TIMELINE OF EVENTS**

- **1988** → CIT is founded in the Colleges of Arts and Sciences as a means of improving the quality of teaching.
- **1989** → CIT goes campus-wide, emphasizing diversity and inclusion as key components for teaching & learning.
- **1983-2000** → Over 200 faculty have attended faculty development seminars.
- **1990, 1991** → CIT coordinated Diversity Working Group of faculty, students and staff which won university-wide acceptance for a diversity curriculum requirement.
- **1992-1996** → CIT gains grant from the Ford Foundation which continues to fund seminars for faculty to revise and devise new courses with a central focus on issues of diversity.
- **1996-1999** → Diversity Research Initiative creates student/faculty research committee funded by the Ford Foundation.
- **1997** → Estelle Disch is Interim Director for the Spring Semester.
- **1997** → The university’s deans and the Provost of Academic Affairs begin funding the CIT faculty seminars.
THE STRUCTURAL FRAME

Organizations need leaders and managers who ensure that there are clear organizational goals. The structure should be aligned with these goals in order to avoid conflict and confusion within the group. Members can help create efficient structures that are able to fulfill its goals. Effective leaders are able to solve problems and work through various difficult situations.

The organizational plan of CIT resembles a web where all members’ opinions are valued. Although Esther was the “visionary” behind the organization and the leader for many years, her role was more of a collaborator than an authority figure. Rather than leading the group from the top-down, she efficiently and effectively managed the group from the center (see chart). “The leader at the center derives strength from building up connections rather than from compartmentalizing, dividing in order to conquer” (Helgessen, 1990, p. 56). As the leader, she was largely interested in mentoring the group and reaching out to other professors to join the Board. The members of the CIT had professional autonomy and the freedom to explore...
their interests. “The circle is inclusive, but it allows for flow and movement of the circle doesn’t box you in” (Helgessen, 1990, p. 44). The efficacy and performance of CIT depended on the equal division of labor among the members. It is also interesting to note that Esther has been replaced by Vivian as head of CIT, and yet we still feel that Ester is at the center of the web. Structurally by position, Vivian should be in the middle, and to some extent is because she is taking care of the responsibilities of the director. However, Esther is still very much the “visionary” in the group and remains a strong leader in spite of her official title change.

The Center for Improvement of Teaching (CIT) was created to address the growing diversity of UMB. There was no choice but to address the issue and design a structure “to fit an organization’s circumstances, “including its goals, technology and environment” (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 40). One of the goals of CIT is to create a space for student/faculty dialogues, and so by setting up a lateral, web-like structure CIT is encouraging all levels and positions to talk with each other and utilize each other as resources. This reflects the overall environment CIT is trying to create: one of equality and democracy between both students and faculty, and so the structure furthers these ideas by allowing contact and comfort at all levels. UMB needed to respond to the growing diverse student body. The group of faculty members and students shared a common goal of offering the students the best teaching possible.

Bolman & Deal (1997) claim that organizations are often ruled by higher powers through rules and control systems. In addition, organizations often use lateral strategies where “forms of coordination are typically less formalized and more flexible than authority-bound systems and rules” (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 44). A goal of CIT is to support the network of the UMB faculty and to integrate student interest into the teaching curriculum. In order to meet its goals, CIT conducts monthly meetings. These board meetings are generally devoted to planning upcoming CIT events, discussing policies on board membership or seminar participation, as well as discussing CIT in the framework of changes in the university administration.

The structure of CIT allows the members freedom, which attracts many faculty members to join. However, the freedom also creates a sense of ambiguity in the group, and a “lack of clarity versus lack of
creativity” (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 60). Some faculty members have different interpretations of CIT’s roles and focus, which can hinder the group from inviting more members into the group. For example, during interviews with two different members, one person stated that they viewed CIT as a researched based initiative, but another person viewed CIT as a practice based initiative. Bolman & Deal (1997, p. 40) claim that “[o]rganizations work best when rationality prevails over personal preferences and external pressures.” CIT has been successful thus far because of its vision to improve pedagogy by addressing students’ needs and interests. Nevertheless, each member’s different perception perhaps has made it more difficult to attract other professors and prevents CIT from expanding. Although CIT has been unable to reach out to as many groups as they would like, they have been able to provide a nurturing environment for all the members who do join CIT.

In order to overcome this obstacle, task forces can be formed. Members of CIT who share similar visions can collaborate in smaller groups to recruit other like-minded professors. “Task forces assemble when new problems or opportunities require collaboration of a number of different specialties or functions” (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 44). Meetings allow members to come together and collaborate, but they are also very time consuming. Some professors want to become involved in CIT, but after attending one or two meetings decide that they cannot make the time commitment. Even though the members of CIT may have different interests, they respect one another’s agendas and try to form groups of coordination and control that allow everyone to “work together in the service of organizational goals” (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 14). CIT sponsors forums, workshops, seminars, and conferences throughout the year, and on average has 5-7 events per semester and a university-wide conference every January. Small groups meet to discuss teaching, learning and change several times in each semester in what CIT calls “student/faculty dialogues”. CIT’s commitment to “high quality, inclusive education for an increasingly diverse student body” (CIT pamphlet) is made possible by the collaboration, flexibility, and passion of the Board members.

THE HUMAN RESOURCE FRAME
It is not hard to see that the people, Esther Kingston-Mann especially, are what define CIT. Since CIT is a voluntary organization, it is almost guaranteed that those who are involved want to be. In applying the human resources frame to CIT, several basic assumptions hold true (Bolman & Deal, 1997). First, the organization exists to serve human needs. The professors who are a part of CIT volunteer because they are interested in bettering education, and so the organization is there for the professors, the students, and the reputation of the school as a whole. Second, people and organizations need each other. Members need CIT for recognition and pedagogical support, and CIT needs its members to ‘get the word out’ and reach a broader base. As further validation of their work and involvement in CIT as being recognized and acknowledged as important by the university community, professors that participate as Board members receive university service credits. Furthermore, those that lead seminars or serve as CIT director receive a course load reduction for the semester.

It is critical to note that the organization would not exist if it were not for dedicated and committed people that are involved and for the individual contributions of its members. For example, Professor Lin Zahn contributes a different viewpoint as a result of her personal experience and the department in which she teaches. Because she is one of the few CIT members who teaches in the sciences, her input and knowledge is particularly important in helping to determine how to reach faculty and students in the sciences more effectively.

Finally, we consider the assumption that fit determines a poor or positive organizational-employee relationship. CIT and its members fit well together. Part of the positive fit is that members are not “employees” per se. They have volunteered their time and effort and as a result are a part of CIT only because they want to be. Part of the success of CIT-member fit is a product of Esther Kingston-Mann’s leadership. As the instigator and previous director of the program, Kingston-Mann has worked hard to ensure that professors are not only interested in bettering their teaching, but also that their opinions and concerns are an integral part of CIT. In looking at the consequences of poor fit as listed by Argyris, the organization has none of the associated problems: physical withdrawal (i.e. absenteeism), mental withdrawal,
resistance, hierarchical struggles, or group forming. Instead, the members are positive, motivated, and interested.

To understand why CIT’s members are happy with the organization, it is important to consider Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. According to Maslow (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 104), there is a hierarchy to the needs humans have that exceeds physiological needs and safety. CIT is posed to help with Maslow’s needs. First, CIT provides a sense of belonging. The group of professors who work together share a sense of purpose and desire to better the educational practices at UMB for students, professors, and institutions alike. Second, CIT can also help with esteem of both self and others. The organization exposes existing curriculum and pedagogical concerns and helps professors overcome such challenges by harnessing the collective experience of their colleagues. The high level of collegiality helps professors to value each other for their work and support, and feel valued in return. Many of the existing problems and concerns when tackled alone are daunting; by working together, these teachers can accomplish their goals thereby increasing the esteem in which they hold each other and themselves. Finally, CIT allows and encourages these professors to develop to their fullest potential (self-actualization in Maslow’s terms). CIT’s members do not rest on past successes and settle for what is working “well enough.” Instead, they push themselves and each other to think beyond the status quo, thereby developing their own skills to the fullest potential. Many CIT members have become “scholars of teaching” and presenters at teaching conferences in addition to being scholars in their own disciplines (e.g., Tim Sieber in Anthropology, Esther Kingston-Mann in History, and Cass Turner in Psychology).

According to McGregor (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 105), there are two theories that are held by organizations in the way they look at their employees. “Theory X” suggests employees are passive, lazy, resist change, and need to be led. CIT does not subscribe to this theory. In fact, the aim of the organization is just the opposite, conditioning its members so that they can achieve their own goals while also reaching the organization’s goals. The organization’s primary goal is to strive for educational democracy and diversity in the university as a whole. To professors, this is the secondary goal. Professors’ primary goal is much more specific: to create equality and diversity in their own classrooms. CIT allows professors autonomy in
working toward their own goals, in part because the professor’s goals forward the work of the organization at large. This “Theory Y” is exactly what CIT aims to achieve. The organization attracts professors who are concerned with diversity and teaching methods at UMB and encourages them to work on their own classes in an autonomous manner, as well as talking to and helping others accomplish the same thing.

CIT operates on a Model II theory (Argyris & Schön, Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 147). They emphasize their mutual goals in meetings and presentations to further their mutual cause. They communicate openly and talk about classroom assumptions and beliefs. They also combine advocacy and inquiry in their meetings by supporting each other in their goals and encouraging those around them to go farther. Meetings and discussions are venues for exchanging and expanding ideas. The challenge here is extending the inquiry past those who participate voluntarily.

It is also important to look at the strategies CIT uses to reach the level of fluency they have accomplished. CIT has clearly invested in its people. Not only does it provide training sessions and meetings to talk about concerns, it also lets people celebrate their accomplishments. Members of CIT share openly about their successes (and failures) with each other and also often have seminars where they can share their successes with others in the school community. Promotion, what little there is, is internal and based on experience and interest. When CIT was looking for a new director, the board offered the position to Sieber, who has a similar amount of experience as Kingston-Mann. However, Sieber was not interested in holding the position, perhaps because of the heavy emphasis on administrative details and the time commitment the responsibility involved. Zamel was then offered and accepted the position, based on her experience and interest.

CIT’s members have long been autonomous in their practice, striving for democracy not only within the classroom, but also within their organization. By being a part of CIT, members enrich their jobs by bettering their teaching skills and developing a clear understanding of classroom concerns. When the above strategies of human resources are applied, the implications are as follows: CIT has accomplished an organization with feedback, support, organizational training, and organizational development, and values its members because by valuing them they will in turn produce better output together. This is part of the
strength that they have already built into the program, and forms a strong foundation that helps to guide them through the numerous changes in leadership.

THE POLITICAL FRAME

Several of the operational aspects of CIT are similar to the characteristics that coincide with the political frame. One fundamental element of the political frame is that coalitions are key. “Individuals and groups have different objectives and resources, and each attempts to bargain with other players to influence goals and decisions” (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 166). Such coalitions do exist within CIT; for example, Kingston-Mann and Zamel must work in close collaboration in order to better ensure individual and group success during the exchange of leadership. Because much of CIT’s focus has come from Kingston-Mann in the past, in order for the program to continue in the direction that is has been heading, it is important that, Zamel as the new director, has a clear understanding of Kingston-Mann’s vision. Time and energy are scare resources among professors, therefore it is crucial that Kingston-Mann and Zamel work together to ensure that the program remains a pursuit worthy of the commitment necessary from its participants.

Perhaps more notable than CIT’s internal coalitions is the notion that CIT is itself a coalition within the larger university setting. In pursuit of establishing effective pedagogy and a professionally supportive network of professors, CIT is seen externally as a group of similar-minded faculty that stands for a common goal. While a coalition of people often gives strength to a cause (there is power in numbers, especially those that possess a specialized reserve of knowledge), on the flip-side it is possible for such groups to be viewed by resistance not in terms of the strengths each member offers, but merely as the cause it represents. Consequently, stereotypes might be formed that hinder the realization of goals externally. According to Sieber, CIT is often referred to by outsiders as “that diversity crew;” others view CIT’s mission as “touchy-feely.”

Such stereotypes may have negative connotations with some people or groups who might prefer to spend their scarce time and energy on other academic endeavors—for example, remaining
up-to-date on subject matter, rather than focusing on the process of teaching. According to Sieber, this has been a particular source of concern with faculty in the sciences. However, according to Kingston-Mann, “in the last CIT seminar for junior faculty, half of the participants were from the sciences—from math, biology and environmental sciences.” This illustrates progress for CIT. Not without struggle, CIT was able to reach out and gain support of faculty in departments that did not always view CIT’s mission as an academic priority. This was accomplished both by CIT’s maintaining a cohesive presence within the university, and by effectively demonstrating the importance of its mission and the benefits it affords to various factions of the faculty, many with differing, and often conflicting priorities.

Two more key elements of the political frame were made obvious through our conversation with Lin Zhan. During the interview, Zhan recalled her attempts to schedule a CIT-sponsored workshop for the faculty of the sciences. Zhan asked for an hour for her presentation. She was offered thirty minutes, to which she agreed. This interaction illustrates both the scarcity of resources and the bargaining and negotiation in most organizations. Time was limited for Zhan’s work, yet through the bargaining she engaged in with the faculty of the sciences, Zhan was able to accomplish at least part of her goal. It was important to Zhan that she did not push too hard, for fear of leaving individuals with a negative feeling about the organization. While Zhan would have preferred to have more time to present her work to the science faculty, by settling on thirty minutes she was able both to get her message across and to do so without offending faculty members at UMB. “Negotiating is needed whenever two or more parties with some interests in common and others in conflict need to reach agreement” (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 186). Both those opposed to CIT and those supporting it saw benefits in group meetings and presentations. However, only through bargaining and negotiating was Zhan able to use collective meeting time for her own political agenda.

The UMB administration has the power to allot resources and rewards, such as funding and voice time at meetings, to organizations within the university such as CIT. **If CIT intends to expand, it must continue to exert the various forms of power it possesses in order to obtain the resources it requires.**
For example, because CIT has increasingly become known as a wealth of knowledge in terms of diversity issues, members are often asked to provide advice in different forums. By establishing itself as indispensable on such matters, CIT has become a more powerful entity and is thus considered entitled to some portion of the scarce resources it seeks.

Agenda setting is an essential element of the political frame. Kingston-Mann has clearly, through years of work, established an aim for her organization. Interviews suggest that board members are very much behind the agenda that she has set forth in CIT’s effort to improve teaching at UMB. However, there is another aspect:

“Effective leaders create an agenda for change with two major elements: a vision balancing the long-term interests of parties involved and a strategy for achieving the vision, recognizing the full range of competing internal and external forces” (Kotter, 1988).

It is quite clear that Kingston-Mann has a vision for where her organization should be going in terms of campus-wide expansion. However, when evaluating the organization, one must wonder where the structure exists to help make Esther’s vision a reality. Esther’s goal is to improve the teaching of the entire faculty at UMB. However, as it stands now, it seems that there is a large contingency of the university, primarily lying within the sciences, that resists investment in the program. Perhaps a hopeful note on this issue however, is that in the last CIT seminar for junior faculty, half of the participants were from the sciences; including math, biology and environmental sciences. One of those professors will also be presenting a workshop at the January 2001 conference and will also be invited to join the CIT Advisory Board.

As illustrated above, alliances, coalitions, and agendas all play a positive operational role within CIT. However, where CIT appears to face some political challenges is within the university as a whole. Bolman and Deal suggest that, “organizations are inherently dependent on a changing and turbulent environment and in the long run retain their clout only by successful adaptation to larger social forces” (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 211). Politically, Esther’s success in obtaining grants and developing such a
progressive and effective program has provided her certain political clout that could likely help move the mission of CIT forward. (For example, the university will be more responsive to the needs of her organization if they feel her efforts will result in further grants, thus raising the status of the university at large.) However, Kingston-Mann does not wish to be the symbol of CIT simply to obtain the resources and reputation that such symbolism might afford. She is also correct in her belief that if CIT is to outlast her as she moves on to other endeavors, as she surely hopes it does, the organization needs to gain political power in its own right, rather than simply relying on the power of its former director.

THE SYMBOLIC FRAME

Education is a highly symbolic discipline, as students create meaning from the lessons they are taught. The substance of what’s learned is never a true model of teacher intentions, but rather a recreation of what makes sense within a student’s own frame of reference and realm of understanding. It is reasonable, therefore, to assert that an education is most meaningful to students when it can be easily linked to the lives they live. CIT was created largely in response to the recognition of the significant disconnect that existed between UMB’s highly diverse student body and its highly academic, upper middle class faculty. As one professor put it: “I used to avoid students in my class by lecturing the entire class and lecturing above their heads. I knew they were bored and disconnected from the class” (Suzanne Benally Report).

By gleaning the collective knowledge of UMB faculty, staff, and students, rather than outside consultants, CIT not only accentuated the wealth of knowledge contained within the university, but also illuminated the eagerness of professors to learn how best to reach their students. CIT represented fundamental values held by the faculty who subscribed to its mission; it signified their desire to provide a high quality and meaningful education to those whom they taught. While this seems an obvious goal of a professorial staff, the culture that existed within UMB in 1983 did little to embrace the widespread diversity on campus or foster a relevant curriculum among its students.

In addition to providing a forum for teacher improvement, CIT nurtured a culture in which faculty was encouraged to thrive. Edgar Schein characterizes organizational culture as “a pattern of shared basic
assumptions that a group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members” (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 231). This definition describes a phenomenon that becomes embedded over time, is often implicit within an organization, and provides a cohesive foundation on which values, assumptions, and meanings are shared by its members. Interestingly, Schein’s depiction of organizational culture can also be applied in a literal sense to the goals of CIT—an organization that exists to share, develop, and institutionalize teaching practices that have succeeded for professors in the past.

Within the barebones structure of UMB, CIT created a safe haven in which innovative pedagogy was discussed, collegiality encouraged, and new ways of teaching developed. While CIT sought to provide a service to make education more meaningful for students, it also created a learning community for faculty in which they were encouraged to share experiences, take risks, and realize their own potential as both teachers and learners. CIT provided a space in which faculty could rediscover and define the meaning of their teaching profession. “From a symbolic perspective,” according to Bolman and Deal (1997, p. 231), “meaning is the basic human need.”

When considering the symbolic nature of CIT, it is crucial to examine the role of leadership. The pervasive opinion of the board members whom we interviewed was that the head of CIT assumed a primarily administrative role. As our group set out to examine the changes that occurred within the organization resulting from the frequent transition of power, we were slightly disappointed to learn that there were no “juicy scandals,” nor large-scale transformations of any kind. As we initially approached our quest to analyze transitional power, however, we made the mistake of equating leadership with directorship. As we dug deeper into the organization we discovered leadership so omnipresent, so assumed, and such an embodiment of CIT’s underlying culture, that it was nearly impossible to separate the two. Throughout our interviews, Esther Kingston-Mann was repeatedly described as a “visionary,” an “innovator,” and an “inspiration.” Regardless of the position she held, she continuously provided guidance and motivation to those involved with CIT. Internally she symbolized the ideals on which CIT was founded and which were so
avidly embraced by its members. Externally, the grants she obtained represented status in the eyes of administration and granted legitimacy to the program within the university and community at large.

As we probed our interviewees about any challenges or uncertainty that CIT now faces, one of the largest challenges identified is how to separate the image of Esther from the organization she has created. **On one hand, the fact that frequent changes in directorship have had little impact on the stability of CIT illustrates the shared commitment and responsibility that its members feel to realize the organization’s goals. On the other hand, the fact that few hurdles or challenges were identified by our interviewees as a consequence of frequent transition in leadership may also symbolize just how steadfast Esther’s power has remained, despite alterations of her official title.**

Although CIT may be now be institutionalized within UMB (institutionalization being largely characterized by yearly funding), several board members speculated that a certain degree of momentum would be lost without Esther’s involvement. As Esther prepares for new endeavors, she too recognizes the function she serves as the symbol of CIT, both internally and externally. The question lies whether the organizational culture Esther has created is embedded enough within CIT to maintain momentum without her, or if she in fact *is* the culture, and without her as a fixture, it will cease to thrive. While CIT demonstrates the power of symbolism and meaning as driving forces in an organization, its ambiguous future also underscores the danger of relying too heavily on mobile symbols as the primary source of inspiration.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Since CIT’s inception, the program has experienced a tremendous amount of success and has achieved significant growth and accomplishments. However, as the initiative enters a new phase in its leadership, there are several issues that should be addressed in order to ensure its continued success.

One of the most salient challenges indicated by the individuals who were interviewed was the expansion of the program campus wide. During one interview, the respondent stated that “this is mostly a Humanities and Social Sciences thing,” which perhaps indicates a lack of interest in expanding to other fields. The priority to expand may have lost its momentum due to resistance experienced with past efforts. In
order to expand outside the Humanities and Social Sciences, it is important for the current board members to increase the dialogue campus wide and explore untraditional channels of communication that have not been tried before. For example, most expansion efforts currently rely on word of mouth and the ensuing interest it produces; we suggest instead actively recruiting professors for the expertise and understanding they would bring to CIT. The culture of the current group is very collaborative, collegial, warm, and accepting. It is very important to this group to recruit and include other faculty to CIT who would contribute to this “good fit.” Unfortunately, it may be this very atmosphere that may deter other faculty from subscribing to the ideals of CIT. The Sciences have a narrow and strict curriculum not open to different interpretations. The faculty do not tend to be “touchy feely” and have historically focused less on teaching and more on research. The current Board Members must work on pedagogy that is more amenable to the teaching structure and materials of other subjects. If methods of teaching in sciences could be specifically addressed and developed, more faculty may be more open to altering or adapting other teaching methods.

The benefits of being involved with CIT could also promoted more publicly in order to highlight the mutually beneficial relationship that the program offers to faculty who are not yet involved. One example of how CIT has already been successful in this respect is the institutionalization of credit that is awarded to Assistant Professors for their participation in the program. The CIT Board members could capitalize on this incentive, along with the many other benefits of CIT such as its sense of community and professional development, by approaching new faculty when they first arrive at UMB. Finally, it would be good to utilize the expertise of faculty in resisting departments, such as the sciences, to explore more effective ways of promoting the program within their disciplines. Before any of this is to happen, however, CIT must reevaluate their goals and preferences; through what means are they willing to achieve expansion? Kingston-Mann has already expressed that she does not want to use the Ford Foundation grants she has obtained to leverage other resources. Such priorities must be established prior to embarking on expansion efforts.

In viewing an organization through the political frame, it is important to consider the coalitions that have formed. One coalition that does not exist but should is that between CIT and UMB students. Many students do not seem to be aware that CIT even exists, or that there is a group of faculty committed to
improving their teaching so that the curriculum is more relevant and more applicable to UMB students. Interviewers from Group 7 asked several students on the subway shuttle bus to UMB whether they knew anything about CIT, and they indicated that they “never heard anything about it.” In several classes in the Harvard Graduate School of Education, some alumni of UMB were questioned as to whether they were familiar with CIT, and all indicated that they were not. It seems that if student support were obtained and mobilized, CIT would not only gain additional institutional support, it would also better serve the student population for which it was initially created. Without student support, the initiative may face difficulties in validating their importance and the significant contributions it makes to the improvement of teaching.

**Garnering student support will increase CIT’s visibility throughout the university. The students may advocate for its effectiveness and encourage its utilization campus-wide. The university’s administration will perhaps realize its importance and effectiveness if more students voiced their support.** Along these lines, in order to obtain campus wide recognition and respect, it would be beneficial to perform an assessment of the classroom improvements that CIT has produced by obtaining both faculty and student perspectives. **This is a suggestion in which Kingston-Mann has found fascinating and plans to discuss with Zamel and the Advisory Board.**

Finally, although CIT has been functioning successfully within its highly lateral structure, in any transition of leadership it is important to regroup and clarify the organization’s goals in order to ensure that all members are in line with the same philosophy and mission. Kingston-Mann has served as the visionary for the group for several years. She is now trying to step back to allow board members to take a more active role. Interviews with several members of the Board have indicated that they are unclear of the direction in which CIT is headed and what the priorities will be. As Kingston-Mann decreases her involvement in the organization, and thus the primary source of guidance and leadership is diminished, it is important for Zamel to define her role as director—can she follow Kingston-Mann’s example of inspirational leadership, or will she serve primarily administrative duties? If the latter is true, it will be important for the volunteer participants of the program to look to new sources of inspiration. Because there exists a wealth of innovation and talent within CIT’s membership, it would be beneficial to structure the program in such a way as to
formalize the contributions that each member has to give. This could be accomplished by lending more
definition to the roles and tasks of each member. If a more formalized structure were to occur, however, it
would be crucial to retain the open and non-hierarchical community on which CIT’s members have come to
rely and cherish.

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