

Teaching methods Seminar

12 November 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Twenty faculty members attended the teaching methods seminar on the 12th of November 2007.

The session's objective was to initiate teaching methods seminars and to enquire whether such a seminar would be useful for CMU-Q faculty using brainstorming and a survey.

The brainstorming session clearly highlighted **a pressing need for faculty on the ground for professional development in the whole array of teaching methods.**

Most importantly, the students' issues section is by far the longest. Students' abilities to learn and students' skills are perceived to be quite poor *at all levels* and there was little questioning...of our teaching delivery. Here is my take on this:

CMU in Qatar is an extraordinary melting pot of cultures; students come from different countries and study in different education systems; part of the faculty are not based in Qatar and may not have received enough exposure to the local "culture":

We need support and training in teaching across cultures; We need support in teaching students with different abilities levels; We need support in helping the freshmen students improve their fundamental skills.

The question about the most pressing issues in teaching delivery highlights **a need to address students' weaknesses.** So I suggest to cover in our **next teaching seminar our perceptions of students and how we can work out to better understand and listen to them.**

The main conclusion is that we do not have the expertise on the ground to address faculty needs. The Eberly Center may address some of our needs as highlighted by the survey, but will not cover the specific requirements of the region, the culture(s), and the various education systems.

Teaching Seminar methodology

Date: 12 November 2007

Duration: 1 hour

Number of attendees: 20

Organizers: Selma Limam Mansar, Yonina Cooper

The seminar was attended by 20 out of the 39 faculty based in Qatar on the cmu-faculty mailing list.

After the seminar, the teaching assistants expressed an interest and asked to be included in the seminar's mailing list.

The session's objective was to initiate teaching methods seminars and to enquire whether such a seminar would be useful for CMU-Q faculty.

To do so, the session was divided in two parts:

Part 1: A Brainstorming session around faculty's teaching concerns

Part 2: A Survey on faculty's expectations from the Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence

Brainstorming session: Faculty's teaching concerns

Attendees were asked to identify issues related to their teaching delivery. The issues were not discussed during the session. The purpose was to gather as many thoughts as possible in half an hour. After the session, the issues were grouped in four main categories: Students' related issues, Assessment related issues, Course design and 'other' issues.

Here are the themes developed during the brainstorming session:

Assessment:

Developing grading strategies and mapping the assessments to the actual learning,

Providing useful feed-back to students,

Designing assessments that address and support different learning styles,

Questioning the value of the mid-term evaluation.

Course design:

Providing support in designing course syllabi; having syllabi ready for students on time,

Teaching students how to discuss a business case study,
Coaching class discussions,
Teamwork management,
Course management,
Improving teaching delivery,
Introducing a variety of teaching styles and activities in the classroom,
Adjusting the pace delivery to students: how to manage when a course is taken by students with differing abilities?
Receiving useful feed-back from students' evaluations and from class observations.

Students' issues:

Poor time management,
Lack of responsibility,
Late submission of assignments,
Addressing language issues: students have difficulties understanding concepts in class due to limited English; students hand-in poor answers to assignments to due to a lack of understanding of the questions,
Faculty need to write crystal clear questions in their assignments,
Addressing students' immaturity,
Encouraging students to take notes,
Improving students' confidence,
Develop open-ended thinking ,
Strengthen math abilities,
Students concentrate on grades and not on learning,
Address students (lack of) critical thinking skills,
Address students (lack of) motivation,
Address students (lack of) responsibility,
Address students (lack of) problem solving skills,
Address students (lack of) curiosity for learning.

'Other':

Better usage of technology for teaching delivery
(Should we) Limit on-campus events
Questioning admission standards: faculty members who participated in prospective students' interviews recommended rejecting some students who are now in the freshmen pool.

Most pressing issues:

Faculty members were asked at the end of the brainstorming session to identify the most pressing issues they felt we should address in our future teaching seminars. 16 out of the 20 attendees replied. So we had a total of 32 answers identified as “most pressing” by faculty. Detailed faculty answers are available in appendix 2.

Here are the recurring topics:

- Students' time management (6)
- Developing students' critical thinking skills (5)
- Developing students' responsibility (4)
- Developing students' curiosity (4)
- Developing students' problem-solving skills (2)
- Developing students' motivation/confidence (2)
- Improving faculty's feedback to students (2)
- Developing students' reading skills (1)
- Becoming a better teacher (1)
- Improving faculty's presentation skills (1)
- Addressing the admission standards (1)
- Developing students' communication skills, in English (1)
- Developing students' Quantitative/math skills (1)
- Using Technology in Teaching (1)
- Varying teaching styles in teaching delivery (1)

Survey: What do you expect from the Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence?

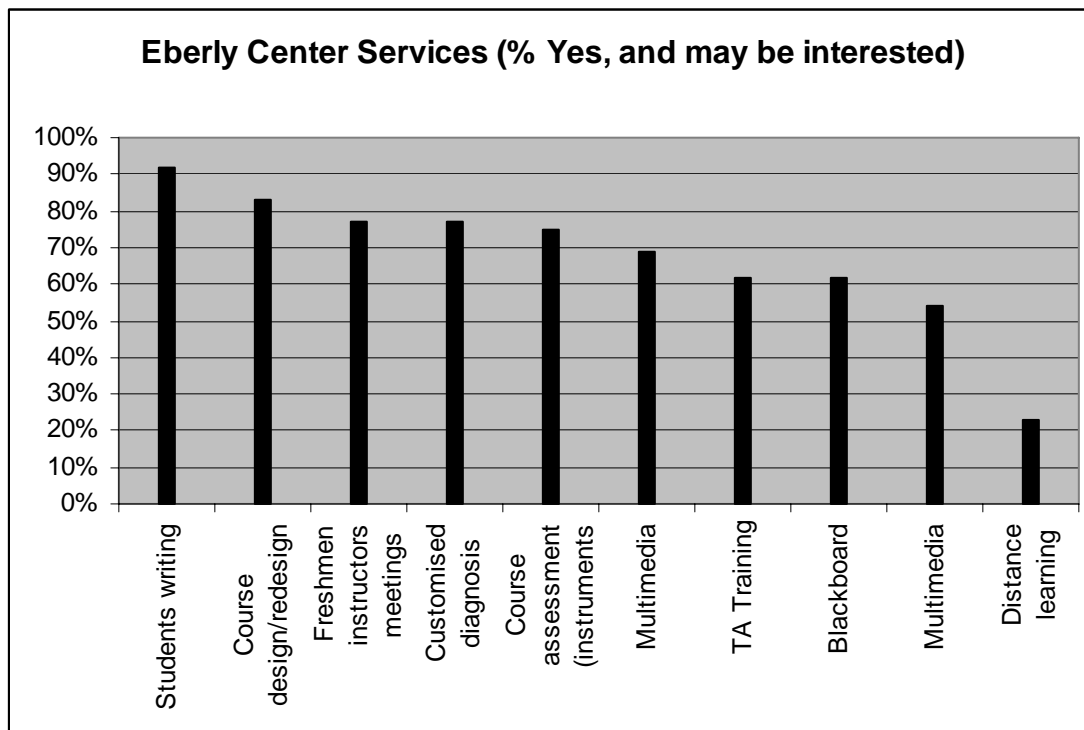
The center's activities were presented to faculty and then we asked them to indicate whether they would be interested in having similar activities at CMU-Q. Possible answers were (Yes, No and May be). The full survey is available in appendix 3.

We have briefly presented what the center currently offers:

- Teaching support for faculty
 - Consultations:
 - Customized diagnosis
 - Course design/redesign
 - Cultivating students writing
 - Discussions with first-year undergraduates teaching
 - TA training
 - Assessing course progress
- Support for teaching with technology
 - Blackboard,

- Distance learning,
- Multimedia, etc
- Teaching support for Graduate students
- Junior faculty seminars
- Faculty orientation

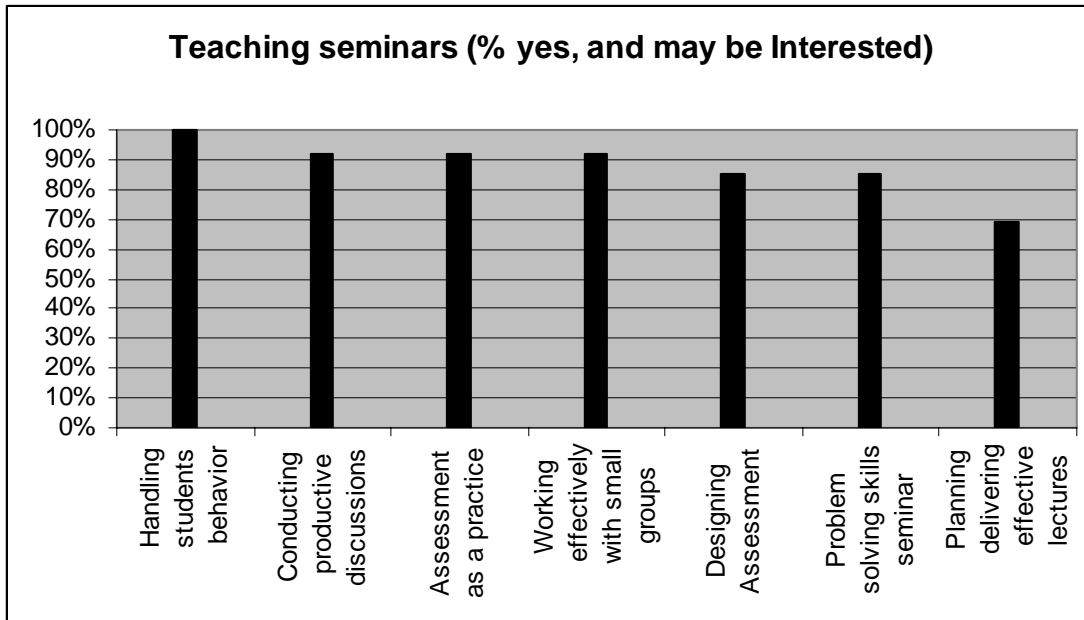
As for the services offered by the Eberly center, the majority of faculty responded positively to the various activities. Of less interest to faculty are the technology support services. The following graph shows the percentages of interested faculty (answered yes or may be to the survey questions).



- Faculty luncheon seminars
 - Examples:
 - What Are Experts' Problem-Solving Skills and How Can We Teach Them?"
 - Assessing What You Teach and Teaching What You Assess
 - Integrating Assessment into your Teaching Practice
 - Working Effectively with Small Groups
 - Handling Problematic Student Behavior
 - Planning and Delivering Effective Lectures

- Conducting Productive and Engaging Discussions

As for the seminars series offered by the Eberly center, the majority of faculty responded positively to the various seminars. The following graph shows the percentages of interested faculty (answered yes or may be to the survey questions).



Conclusions

The brainstorming session clearly highlights **a pressing need for faculty on the ground for professional development in the whole array of teaching methods**. All the usual topics, from course design, course evaluation, design of assessment, and usage of technology were mentioned by faculty.

Most importantly, with the brainstorming session unusually numerous observations were made by faculty about "the students". Students' abilities to learn and students' skills are perceived to be quite poor and there was no questioning at any point ...of our teaching delivery. **The students' issues section is by far the longest** and should not be so as the initial question was not about students but about... teaching delivery, our teaching delivery.

Here is my take on this:

CMU in Qatar is an extraordinary melting pot of cultures; students come from different countries and study in different education systems; part of the faculty are not based in Qatar and may not have received enough exposure to the local “culture”. Many of us come loaded with stereotypes about the local students and the local culture and it is hard to get rid of the preconceived ideas and look beyond the surface to unravel the treasures.

...Could it be that **we need guidance and training in teaching across cultures?** Could it be that **we need guidance in teaching across different abilities levels?** Could it be that **we need guidance in helping the freshmen students improve their fundamental skills?**

The question about the most pressing issues in teaching delivery highlights **a need to address students’ weaknesses** rather than our needs for professional training: Students’ time management, students’ critical thinking skills, students’ (lack of) responsibility and students’ (lack of) curiosity are the recurring themes.

So I suggest that **our next teaching seminar should address our perceptions of students and how we can work out to better understand and listen to our students.** We can then pick up ‘time management’ and share best practices.

We do NOT have the expertise on the ground to address faculty needs. The Eberly Center may address some of our needs as highlighted by the survey, but will not cover the specific requirements of the region, the culture(s), and the various education systems.

APPENDIX 2: MOST PRESSING ISSUES

(16 RESPONDENTS)

Write down the two most pressing teaching concerns you would like to see addressed in our next Teaching Methods Seminar:

- 1) High School mindset
Lack of independent thinking
- 2) Confidence to think for themselves
Motivation, organization time management
- 3) Professors' perception of students of how they need to change by fully understanding and accepting the setting
- 4) Open-ended exploratory thinking
- 5) Aspects of self-regulation skills: Time management, Responsibility
- 6) Setting realistic expectations for students
Varying class activities
- 7) Critical thinking & problem solving skills
Students' lack of time management/ responsibility passion/ intellectual curiosity
- 8) Time management
Lack of curiosity
- 9) How to develop reasoning skills in students
How to train myself to be a better teacher in class and outside class; what skills do I need to develop
- 10) Students need to become self-starters in terms of reading, participating in class,
Solving problems
- 11) Faculty need to improve their class presentation skills in the ESL setting
Faculty need to improve their ability to provide feedback and guidance to students
- 12) Students learning styles
Time management
- 13) Admission standards
Lack of curiosity, confidence in students
- 14) Time management
Quality and timely student feedback
- 15) Intellectual curiosity (I think this course, other topics as well such as responsibility, focus on grades, lack of direction, pace, etc.)
Ability to communicate well in one language (in lack of ability on the students' behalf, to engage in academic pursuits in English)
- 16) Quantitative/ Math thinking skills development
The use of technology in modern teaching

APPENDIX 3: SURVEY

APPENDIX 4: Survey results

	Customised diagnosis	Course design/redesign	Students writing	Freshmen instructors meetings	TA Training	Course assessment (instruments and data)	Blackboard	Distance learning	Multimedia
Survey_data.xml	1	1	1	2	2	3	3		
Survey_data10.xml	1	1	1	3	2	1	2		
Survey_data11.xml	2	2	1	2	2	2	1		
Survey_data12.xml	3	1	1	3	1	1	2		
Survey_data2.xml	2	1	1	1	1	2	2		
Survey_data3.xml	3	3	3	1	2	1	2		
Survey_data4.xml	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
Survey_data5.xml	1	1	1	1	2	3	1		
Survey_data6.xml	3	3	2	1	1	1	3		
Survey_data7.xml	3	3	1	1	1	3	1		
Survey_data8.xml	3	3	3	3	3	1	1		
Survey_data9.xml									
Survey_dataSelma.xml	2			1	1		2		
_167k1378g1c278ahk	1	2	3	2	1	2	3		
Yes	38%	50%	67%	54%	54%	50%	38%	8%	54%
No	23%	17%	8%	23%	38%	25%	38%	77%	31%
May Be	38%	33%	25%	23%	8%	25%	23%	15%	15%
Yes or may be	77%	83%	92%	77%	62%	75%	62%	23%	69%

	Problem solving skills seminar	Designing Assessment	Assessment as a practice	Working effectively with small groups	Handling students behavior	Planning delivering effective lectures	Conducting productive discussions
Survey_data.xml	1	1	1	3	1	1	1
Survey_data10.xml	3	3	3	1	1	3	1
Survey_data11.xml	3	2	1	1	1	1	1
Survey_data12.xml	1	1	1	1	3	3	3
Survey_data2.xml	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Survey_data3.xml	3	1	3	3	1	2	1
Survey_data4.xml	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
Survey_data5.xml	3	1	3	1	1	2	2
Survey_data6.xml	1	1	1	2	1	2	1
Survey_data7.xml	1	1	3	3	3	3	1
Survey_data8.xml	1	1	1	1	3	3	3
Survey_data9.xml							
Survey_dataSelma.xml	1	1			1	1	
_167k1378g1c278ahk.xml	2	2	2	3	1	2	3
Yes	46%	77%	58%	58%	77%	38%	67%
No	15%	15%	8%	8%	0%	31%	8%
May Be	38%	8%	33%	33%	23%	31%	25%
Yes or may be	85%	85%	92%	92%	100%	69%	92%