From the Community, For the Community
Participant Engagement with the Teaching Development Program During the Pandemic

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Overview
Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has not only reshaped pedagogy but also catalyzed a reconfiguration of pedagogical training. Supported by the GSAS Fall 2021 Fellowship in Academic Administration as well as the CTL, this poster charts the evolution of participant engagement with the Teaching Development Program (TDP) during the pandemic.

The TDP helps Columbia graduate students cultivate, document, and reflect on their teaching development. To receive TDP credits, participants upload written reflections for each CTL offering in which they engage. In each reflection, participants articulate changes in their pedagogical perspective and practice, and describe the resulting impact on student learning.

My project focuses on reflections written in fulfilment of the Pedagogy Workshop requirements, a band of TDP requirements that allows for the greatest choice and variety in offerings. In turn, such reflections constitute a dataset that conveys graduate students’ agency and decision-making regarding how and when to move forward in the TDP.

Between 2018, the inaugural year of TDP, and August 31, 2021, right before the return to in-person classes in Fall 2021, TDP participants submitted over 470 reflections for the CTL Pedagogy Workshop requirements. The resulting reservoir of personal narratives—the source material of my project—provides a window into graduate students’ collective experience of pedagogical training, including evidence of resilience and adaptation at the community level.

Methodology
With the goal of developing a sustainable approach to designing and assessing participant engagement, I cataloged and analyzed all reflections submitted to fulfill the TDP Pedagogy Workshop requirements before September 1, 2021.

- Analyzed 473 reflections on CTL Pedagogy Workshops.
- Documented event and submission times for each reflection.
- Categorized general categories and specific themes of any given Pedagogy Workshop offering.

Key Findings
- Participants reflected on attended Pedagogy Workshop events more quickly during the pandemic, compared to years before the pandemic.
- For Pedagogy Workshop events that took place between March 20, 2020 and August 31, 2021, when courses (and CTL offerings) shifted online, the average time between event and reflection decreased from the pre-pandemic era’s three months (95.95 days) to one month (30.93 days).
- Participants demonstrated increased interest in student-led events (Figure 2).

Interventions
- Participants’ improved timeliness in submitting reflections, a strong indicator of enhanced engagement, may be a combined result of several factors, such as:
  A. An increased demand for teaching support in light of the online teaching and pandemic stress-related challenges.
  B. The shift to virtual synchronous and asynchronous offerings ensured the accessibility of CTL events. Additionally, collaborative worksheets used during synchronous meetings and asynchronous modules may have supported reflective practices.

- Pre-pandemic, the Advanced Topics in Teaching series of CTL staff-led workshops enjoyed the biggest share of TDP participants’ reflections. During the pandemic, graduate student-led offerings, namely, the Lead Teaching Fellow (LTF) Workshops and the CTLgrads Learning Communities (LC), witnessed a stunning rise in their share of reflections, an indicator of expanded popularity among graduate students (Figure 2).

Implications: For the Post-Pandemic Teaching Development Program
The COVID-19 pandemic has cultivated a growing demand for student-led pedagogical training opportunities, as TDP participants collectively expressed an increased interest and capacity in embracing pedagogical training as a shared, empowering, and peer-led experience that not only serves the community of graduate student instructors, but also comes directly from it.

Based on findings of this project, the CTL has revised TDP requirements to allow participants to fulfill program requirements by attending more student-designed and student-led workshops.

The CTL continues to offer multiple modalities of offerings to ensure maximal accessibility of TDP (asynchronous and synchronous, in person, online, and hybrid).

The CTL facilitates the development of student-designed and -led workshops through the LTF and LC programs, by trained graduate Teaching Consultants, and through CIRTL. Data from this project suggests there could be additional value in expanding existing efforts, such as by providing small grants and by allowing TDP participants to fulfill program requirements not only by attending but also by designing Pedagogy Workshops. These interventions could create additional capacity among CTL staff, while opening opportunities to cultivate the agency of graduate students by supporting them to define the terms and formats of their own pedagogical growth.

Mobilize the agency of the graduate student community, in which lies innovation and resilience.

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