Strengthening Collegiality to Enhance Teaching, Research, and Scholarly Practice: An Untapped Resource for Faculty Development

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Collegiality lies at the intersection of various aspects of academic practice, including teaching as well as research. As such, assisting junior faculty in learning to build their collegial networks becomes a powerful point of intervention for faculty developers, even for those who focus on teaching development. Data from interviews with faculty engaged in both teaching and research, plus our experiences in conducting a series of career building initiatives are analyzed to identify junior faculty perceptions of the role of collegiality and barriers to establishing collegial ties. Two main barriers are identified: 1) knowing that collegiality and networking is important, and 2) knowing how to go about establishing oneself as a colleague. Recommendations are then offered to faculty developers for working with junior faculty to help address each of those barriers, drawing on the authors' experiments with various workshops and forums.

INTRODUCTION

Collegiality plays a pivotal role in academia, lying at the intersection of different aspects of academic practice. The significance of

collegiality in scholarly communities is taken for granted in the realm of academic research, in which the entire system of peer review, conference attendance, and publication is structured to promote the sharing of work to critique and build upon. Although the role of scholarly community and collegiality is less recognized than other aspects of academic work, academic leadership and community service assume that there is a network of scholars and a community that is being served. Furthermore, the literature on teaching improvement over the past decade has given increasing recognition to the significance of community and collegiality.

The concept of the scholarship of teaching (Boyer, 1990; Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997) has contributed to international attention to peer review and peer collaboration in teaching (Cosser, 1998; Hutchings, 1996; Ramsden, Margetson, Martin & Clarke, 1995; Palmer, 1995; Trow & Clark, 1994; Valimaa, 1994). Viewing peer review as the heart of scholarship, the peer review of teaching movement strives to elevate the status of teaching by invoking the academic convention of peer review. According to Hutchings and Shulman (1999) the scholarship of teaching has four main requirements: 1) being public, 2) open to critique and evaluation, 3) in a form that others can build on, 4) and inquiry-oriented. These criteria put scholarly communities at the center of scholarship in teaching in the same way as they are for scholarship in research.

Given the significance of collegiality to scholarly teaching, academic leadership, service to the community, and research productivity, working with faculty to help enhance their skills in building collegial networks is a particularly effective point of intervention for faculty developers. Yet there has been relatively little attention paid in the literature to faculty development strategies and activities for building skills in collegial networking, or to the challenges that individual faculty face as they learn how to network effectively.

Where the issue of collegial networking has been addressed, it is commonly conceived of narrowly. The most commonly presented purpose of collegiality is to enhance career progression and build research contacts. Mentoring programs are one of the most commonly implemented developmental interventions (Quinlan, 1999) to address this purpose.

This relatively narrow vision and approach restricts the potential of collegial networking as a form of faculty development. When collegiality is primarily seen as a part of developing as a researcher, instructional developers whose primary focus is on enhancing teaching and learning may regard it as outside of their mission. In addition, relying solely on structured mentoring programs for junior faculty leaves those faculty in

schools or institutions without such programs with little support in developing networking skills and strategies. Even where mentoring programs are in place, they have the potential to undermine the importance of faculty taking individual responsibility for and being proactive about building their own networks.

Robert Boice's (1992) comprehensive, longitudinal study of new faculty members in two American universities provides strong support for our arguments about the importance of working with junior faculty to assist the development of collegial networking skills. He stresses that the development of collegiality is one of the key tasks or challenges facing new faculty and emphasizes the significance of collegiality for both teaching and research development. He found that collegiality does not typically develop instantly or spontaneously, but must be explicitly worked on and learned. He also found the desire for collegial contacts in teaching to be as significant a need as the desire for contacts in research. However, his suggestions for faculty development initiatives to help develop collegial skills for new faculty were limited to the typical recommendation of developing a mentoring program.

The aim of this essay is to further explore the nature of collegiality in academia and how junior faculty can be assisted in building collegial networks. We consider a broad range of ways that faculty developers can support junior faculty with the task of building collegial networks and scholarly communities. To do so, we first look more closely at how faculty view the development of collegiality, in order to inform faculty development efforts in this area. This essay draws on data and insights gained from a study of conceptions of academic growth and development among junior and mid-career faculty at a research-intensive university in Australia. In addition, we build on the outcomes of a series of career development initiatives undertaken over a number of years at the same university. Analyzing those sources and reflecting on our own experiences as faculty development professionals working with members of faculty, we present several potential barriers to developing collegiality. We also suggest strategies that faculty developers may use to help overcome these barriers, in order to support faculty effectiveness in a variety of forms of scholarly work.

DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

Interviews with Faculty

As stated above, a significant source of information for the issues addressed in this paper come from a series of interviews conducted with fac-

ulty about their professional growth and development. All of the interviews were with faculty engaged in both teaching and research at the Australian National University. The Australian National University is a traditional, research-intensive university located in the capital of Australia. Interviews were semi-structured, asking faculty what growth and development meant to them, how they went about it, what they were trying to achieve, and why they did it that way, working from examples of development activities volunteered by the interviewees.

The interviews were conducted during the calendar years 1997 and 1998. The faculty interviewed included two groups: 15 junior faculty in entry-level appointments in their first year of appointment to the Australian National University, and ten mid-career faculty. The interviewees were all employed full-time, but on varying terms of appointment and from varied disciplines, cultural backgrounds, and gender. It is important to note that the interviews were conducted as part of a larger study of academic growth and development (Åkerlind, 1999a,b), and thus designed with other purposes and questions in mind than those addressed in this paper. Nonetheless, the views of collegiality that emerged during the interviews provide a useful source of information to help inform the issues raised here.

Career Development Initiatives

Over a similar period as the interviews (1996–1998), several career development initiatives for junior faculty began, with a varying focus on teaching and research faculty, research-only faculty, and women faculty. Again, the goals of these initiatives were broader than developing skills in collegiality, but this issue emerged (either deliberately or spontaneously) as a common theme across the activities, providing further experience to draw on for this paper. The initiatives included:

- a two-day conference for junior women faculty on “Advancing our Careers”
- a one-day workshop for junior faculty on “Building a Career in Academia”
- a half-day workshop for PhD students and postdoctoral fellows on “Planning Life after a PhD”
- a one-week “Academic Women’s Writing Retreat” on scholarly writing and publication
- regular half-day workshops on “Developing a Teaching Portfolio”

- support for a series of flexible mentoring initiatives, designed to suit individual schools

As well as the lessons we learned in designing these activities, we draw on written evaluation responses from participants, comments made during panel presentations by experienced faculty, notes from semistructured discussions among participants at different points during the activities, and our experiences with other faculty development activities. Our joint reflection on these data helped to elucidate issues and potential barriers to forming collegial networks and informed the strategies proposed later in the paper for working with junior faculty on enhancing collegiality and networking.

Types of Collegial Networks and Barriers to Effective Networking

In addressing the question of how we as faculty developers can best assist junior faculty in successfully networking to build collegial contacts, an important starting point is gaining a sense of the ways in which faculty view collegiality. The interviews described above provided a useful source of data in this regard, showing the existence of a variety of different types of networking plus common barriers to being proactive about developing collegial contacts.

As a group, the faculty interviewed referred to a large range of types of collegial contacts that they had formed or needed to form as part of their growth and development. Not all of these were academic contacts, but all involved networks that are essential for achieving the full range of academic work and scholarly practice:

- teaching networks with fellow teachers in one's discipline
- student networks, leading to potential PhD students and postdoctoral fellows
- community networks, particularly to facilitate field work
- research networks, facilitating collaborative research, grant applications, publications, etc.
- media networks, especially to enable greater impact of research findings on the community or broader society
- consultancy networks in private firms and industrial organizations, to increase opportunities for applied research and associated funding
- collegial networks of any type to reduce a sense of academic isolation

This broad range of types and goals of collegial networking both supports and extends Boice's (1992) findings on collegial needs of new faculty. Although Boice limited his discussion of collegial contacts to campus-based colleagues, it is clear that potential colleagues need to be viewed more broadly, including off-campus and significant nonacademic networks. These findings also raise the potential for faculty developers to use the concept of collegiality when working with faculty on a variety of fronts, including instructional development.

As well as considering the range of collegial needs experienced by faculty, it is important to elucidate the range of prior knowledge, strategies, and expectations about collegiality held by junior faculty which help or hinder them in building collegial networks. This understanding aids us in identifying perceptions and strategies junior faculty already have that we can build on and barriers that get in the way of further developing collegial ties. We identify two primary barriers to successful networking among junior faculty, each with several variations. The two barriers can be loosely described as the problem of knowing *that* versus the problem of knowing *how*. The existence of these barriers is supported by the interviews with faculty and our experience with participants in the career development initiatives described above.

Knowing that Proactive Networking Is Important

The first potential barrier to developing collegiality is simply not being fully aware of its importance in faculty life. Evidence of the prevalence of this lack of awareness comes indirectly from the interviews with faculty described above. As the interviews were designed to elicit faculty conceptions of their own growth and development, including their approaches and strategies for developing themselves, the interviewees were encouraged to mention a variety of personally meaningful ways of thinking about and actualizing their development as faculty. Yet only seven of the 15 junior faculty interviewed spontaneously talked about activities that could broadly be called networking or developing collegiality.

Seemingly, for more than half of the junior faculty interviewed the task of developing collegiality as an aspect of faculty development was not important enough to them to raise spontaneously in the context of a discussion about professional growth and development. While several of the experienced faculty interviewed also did not mention this aspect of their professional development, the percentage was substantially smaller than for the junior faculty, with only three of the ten mid-career interviewees *not* raising collegiality issues.

An associated form of naiveté involves not realizing the degree to which one must take the lead and be proactive about building these contacts, even though the importance of developing collegial networks per se is recognized. Some junior faculty may be aware of the importance of becoming a member of scholarly communities but believe that such contacts will occur naturally as an automatic consequence of the normal process of publication and conference presentations, with no additional, focused effort required on their part. One of the junior faculty interviewed, a mathematician in his first year at the Australian National University, illustrates this view in relation to his reputation as a researcher:

"The research side I don't really worry about much. I think that as long as one is doing good research, your work [. . .] will be accumulating. They may not like you in the first place, but after a long time they know that you are doing good research, they will accept you. Once you have done that, you are totally validated in the world environment. Not only for myself, but also for the department and for the Australian National University and for the country. They are all connected. That is my strategy for developing myself. I'm not really worried about that."

This new academic seems to think that to become recognized, he simply has to produce good research and wait to be discovered. He does not seem to attend to his role in promoting his work and himself.

Finally, there are faculty who may be aware of the importance of networking for *some* purposes—to help them in publishing or in building consultancies, for example—but may not have thought about the role of collegiality in other aspects of their academic work, for instance, in improving their teaching.

Knowing How to Network Effectively

The barrier described above does not exist for all junior faculty; many are both aware of the importance of networking and realize that they must be proactive in the process of building collegial ties and establishing themselves in scholarly communities. However, at this point another barrier can arise, in that they may not feel capable or confident in their abilities to go about networking.

For these faculty, the challenge is not in learning *that* they need to develop collegial networks, but in learning *how* to develop collegiality. Their needs are illustrated in workshop evaluation comments like, "[I now have a] much more thorough idea of the kinds of strategies I'll be

using in working towards my career goals." In workshops, these individuals value the opportunity to widen their repertoire of strategies for initiating collegial contacts. They express appreciation for the new strategies that are introduced, and are often relieved to discover that sustaining contact with colleagues is a common difficulty, shared by many of their peers.

However, there is often more involved in learning how to be active in networking than simply learning appropriate skills and strategies. For some, there are psychological or psychosocial barriers related to an individual's shyness, self-confidence, or socialization. Thus, learning how to build collegial contacts has two levels: lack of knowledge or skill with particular strategies and approaches to networking, and difficulty feeling personally comfortable with engaging in the recommended strategies and approaches once they are known.

This latter type of barrier brings up complex issues of self-confidence and personal identity. Some faculty explained that it required considerable confidence and courage to introduce oneself to senior (or indeed junior) colleagues or to share one's work with them. There were several variations on this theme, though what is common to the variations is that achieving success in building a scholarly community can mean confronting oneself in a personal way. Rather than simply needing more techniques or strategies for networking, some faculty need to address personal and emotional aspects of becoming a colleague.

For example, a number of participants in the "Advancing our Careers" conference requested courses on assertiveness as a follow-up to the event. In addition, experienced faculty who were panelists at the conference also emphasized the need to overcome difficulties with the assertive, self-promotional dimension of networking. To be successful in academia, one of them put it succinctly, "I need to be the sort of person that I'm not." Related issues identified by participants in the other workshops on career development include difficulties with risk-taking, negotiation skills, procrastination and the imposter syndrome.

One of the junior faculty interviewed, a recent PhD graduate and new faculty member in Women's Studies, spoke at length about the process of re-envisioning herself as a faculty member:

"You are all the time trying to work out how you might be, being employed as an academic . . . And it's interesting when you have friends who are still in the student category. There is something that's happened that makes you different."

She goes on to cite several instances and examples which she sees as part of being an academic, including:

"I think one of the things I've done is that I haven't been bashful about trying to make contact with established people in my area of study around the world. That's a really good thing to do, and to follow that up. Because that's also part of rethinking yourself as a colleague of theirs. Most people are really responsive."

In another example, she refers to an invitation to present at an international conference:

"I suppose that it was an achievement that I was invited to go by [. . .] who was a very warm and encouraging person. But that's what being comfortable about being an academic is, because there is no insecurity about whether the work is going to be appropriate or whether it will link up well with a whole series of what other people, who have also been invited, are doing. It worked extremely well because . . . the people at the conference were more or less at the same level . . . That was a really happy experience for me. An affirming one."

Envisioning herself as a member of a community of colleagues—all at an equivalent level—rather than as a junior colleague at a lower level, was a crucial part of her relative comfort about developing collegial ties, compared to the experiences of many junior faculty.

Along the same vein, one of the experienced faculty interviewed, from the College of Forestry, explained that it has been his growing self-confidence that allows him to more comfortably seek out the input of a wider circle of colleagues on his work:

"I think it's recognition that there are no limits; that the limits are imposed only by yourself, really—which comes with confidence . . . I think I just feel totally confident, first with my own abilities, but second, because of that, I have absolutely no problem in getting other input from a lot of other people. I suppose what I tend to do more now than I ever have done is to solicit input into project design and implementation. I mean I've always done that to some extent, but probably more now than ever, I think, for a few reasons. One is that I've realized that you can do quantum jumps a hell of a lot easier with other people involved—if they're good people, obviously. I think, also, it's a matter of confidence in your own stature, or whatever you want to call it."

What comes through in these and other comments is the need for junior faculty to develop strategies to help them feel comfortable and confident about networking, as a separate issue from the need to become aware of a wider range of possible networking strategies per se.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

The two types of barriers described above require different types of assistance to promote the successful formation of collegial contacts. In the sections below, we address each type of barrier separately, suggesting ways that faculty developers can address them.

How Faculty Developers Can Address Barriers of Knowing that Proactive Networking Is Important

This first type of barrier represents a lack of awareness of the importance of collegiality to all forms of scholarly work, or of the importance of one's own proactive role in developing collegiality. What is needed is consciousness-raising among such faculty.

However, the biggest challenge faculty developers face in initiating consciousness-raising activities is simply reaching the faculty concerned. Without an awareness of their own role in promoting and managing their careers, these faculty are unlikely to seek out or spontaneously avail themselves of workshops, consultations, books, or other guidance in these areas.

As a first suggestion, faculty developers may need to rethink their marketing strategies for forums addressing issues of collegiality in order to better appeal to those faculty who are not already seeking to develop themselves in this area. For instance, a workshop entitled "Advancing Your Research Career" may be more appealing to the interests of faculty like the new mathematician quoted earlier than one entitled "Building Research Networks," even if they address similar issues. It is our experience that designing programs to meet the needs of faculty is a somewhat separate exercise from designing the marketing of these programs so that faculty perceive them as addressing their needs. The latter aspect requires as careful attention as the former.

In a similar way, faculty developers may take advantage of a range of agendas and forums on various other topics to introduce and reinforce the theme of collegiality. At an orientation session for new appointees, for example, the importance of collegial networking might be a key topic addressed. A newsletter on teaching enhancement could include

suggestions for developing collegiality, testimonials from senior faculty on its importance for them, and examples of their personal strategies for building scholarly communities to support their academic productivity in a variety of ways. Actively searching for opportunities to reinforce the message that the best ideas are often developed with the input of others—whether those ideas become the subject of a paper or a theme in a course or lecture—may heighten awareness within the university community of the importance of collegiality.

If junior faculty are not coming to us directly, it behooves us as faculty developers to think creatively about ways of reaching them indirectly. Senior faculty, course coordinators, heads of research labs, and department chairs have occasions to interact with junior faculty that we do not. Consequently, searching for ways to educate senior colleagues about the career development needs of their less experienced colleagues may be a fruitful avenue to pursue. Senior faculty can be invited to attend or play a role in orientations or other activities that are mainly geared towards junior faculty. Programs on academic leadership can include attention to senior faculty roles in supporting less experienced colleagues. Faculty developers might also consider occasional letters or electronic mailings to department chairs in which this type of issue is raised.

Formal mentoring programs in which the mentors participate in an orientation or training program also come to mind. As we noted earlier, mentoring programs are a common response to these concerns. Even in the absence of a formal program, however, senior colleagues could be encouraged to play a more active role in educating and guiding junior staff in achieving success in their scholarly work, simply in the course of their everyday activities.

However, it is important to be prepared for the fact that senior faculty are not always aware of the needs of their less experienced colleagues or aware that these needs are not necessarily being spontaneously addressed within normal departmental or school processes. For instance, during a seminar we presented on mentoring needs of junior faculty held within one of the Australian National University's science schools, senior members of the audience claimed that these needs were spontaneously addressed by the lab-based, collaborative nature of the discipline. Junior members of the audience, helping to convince the more senior members otherwise to the contrary courageously offered comments.

Such comments are more persuasive when they come from junior faculty themselves rather than from faculty developers. Using workshops and programs to collect comments from new faculty can be useful in this

regard. For instance, during one of our workshops, participants generated two pages of career development suggestions which we typed up for distribution after the event. Such documents can act as a convincing aid when approaching more senior faculty about the needs of more junior faculty, as well as forming a useful resource to distribute at future workshops, in newsletters or orientation programs, and during individual consultations with new faculty.

As a final suggestion, faculty development centers might work with schools or departments in creating faculty development liaison people located within particular subject areas. Such liaisons provide opportunities for sympathetic faculty within the discipline to champion these issues. They may even be explicitly charged with responsibility for organizing initiatives to promote collegiality in the local culture.

How Faculty Developers Can Address Barriers of Knowing How to Network Effectively

A key consideration in addressing this type of barrier is the need for faculty development programs to place as much emphasis on strategies for feeling comfortable about networking as on strategies for networking *per se*. Otherwise, personal or self-perceptual barriers can interfere with putting good networking strategies into practice.

We have experimented with a number of ways of approaching these barriers. One successful approach is the use of panels of faculty who share their personal experiences of networking. Panels made up of either senior or junior faculty can both be effective, appealing to different needs of junior staff. On the one hand, senior faculty can present a long-term perspective, reflecting on their experiences and changing perceptions over time. Furthermore, as they have reached a position of some success, the strategies they describe carry weight. On the other hand, it is easier for junior faculty to identify more closely with their peers or near peers, making suggestions which arise from panels of junior or mid-career faculty potentially more convincing and easier to imagine emulating—especially when there are psychosocial barriers to overcome.

In some of our programs we have chosen to include panels of both junior and senior faculty. Subsequent feedback from participants in these programs showed equal appreciation for both types of panels. Mixed panels of faculty with different levels of experience is also an option we have used with success.

Even more important is the process of selecting and briefing members of such panels, whatever their makeup. To be effective, it is essential

that panel members have a positive attitude toward the issues at hand, are sensitive to the needs of junior faculty, and are willing to speak frankly from their own personal experience. For instance, a member of one of our panels, a senior academic and chair in his department, read aloud from a harsh manuscript rejection letter received in response to the first publication attempt of his career. He then read aloud a recent letter of rejection, explaining that such critiques were a standard experience for faculty at all levels, whether they talked about it or not. You can imagine the effect that this kind of frankness had in opening up discussion. It legitimized the fact that written work does not have to be perfect before it can be shown to one's colleagues and assured the audience that rejection letters are normal experience that can be used to improve one's work. Participants and the panelists went on to discuss the value of seeking feedback from colleagues when preparing and improving papers.

As in most settings, fellow participants in workshops or other events are a wonderful resource for each other. Small group discussion, where participants feel less exposed, is a fruitful arena for generating networking strategies, acknowledging personal barriers and sharing ways of overcoming such barriers. For instance, many participants in our programs have expressed difficulty with feeling comfortable sharing their work and introducing themselves to new colleagues at conferences. Through small group discussion, participants in our programs have shared the following strategies for making the process more comfortable: Attend smaller rather than larger conferences, as they tend to be friendlier and less anonymous; select a conference for regular attendance, as you tend to accumulate contacts over a number of years with other regular attendees; take part in organized sightseeing side trips to make contacts within a smaller, informal group.

Another illustration of the experience and wisdom that new faculty can contribute comes from the following excerpt of an interview with a new member of faculty, several months into his first appointment following graduate school. He describes how he sits in on the classes of faculty in his department (cultural studies) who have a strong word-of-mouth reputation as outstanding teachers, in order to develop his own teaching:

"I approached them directly. I said, 'Look, I understand that you're a great lecturer,' joking but serious as well. So they appreciate that because everyone has an ego. And to have a colleague come to you and say that—they love it and they accept you as well. So they don't feel intimi-

dated by you or anything. So, you go along to their class and they love it . . . Two of them whom I thought were really brilliant in the way they teach—I mean they’ve been teaching for about 15 years, and both of them are very, very competent—they also felt the need to ask me what I thought! And I thought that was nice, too, because of the modesty . . . So that’s one way of approaching colleagues . . .

Usually I took notes. I’m not passive, so I’m actually writing notes and suddenly I find myself, while taking notes and observing, comparing myself and thinking, ‘Ah, I can’t do that; and I don’t do that; I’ve never done this.’ So it’s really alerted me to my weaknesses basically, so I really appreciate that . . . So that’s what colleagues are, human resources. I think that’s the best resource you have, and the most available one as well. Something you can tap into by just picking up the phone or just talking to them. So I value that a lot . . .”

In addition to discussions about networking, fellow junior faculty can also be used to provide initial positive experiences in collegiality; for instance in seeking feedback on one’s work. Mutual feedback sessions among participants can be organized as part of a program, or as an optional follow-up. We have successfully conducted small group feedback sessions focusing on sharing draft grant proposals, paper publications, and in-class teaching.

As a final suggestion, it is also possible to explicitly focus on personal barriers to networking as a specific part of a workshop, by bringing in outside expertise. We have invited counselors from the Australian National University’s Counseling Center to address this issue as part of workshop programs, under titles such as, “What Gets in the Way—Identifying and Overcoming Personal Barriers to Putting your Plans in Place.” This is usually done following a segment on setting goals and making plans, and has been well received.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, this essay argues first for a broad conceptualization of collegiality as a common theme underpinning and unifying academic scholarship in all areas, including teaching, research, and service. This view suggests that helping individual faculty to build a variety of collegial networks and helping to create forums in which collegiality is promoted may be a particularly effective point of intervention for faculty developers. This intervention may be useful even for those developers who

interested solely in instructional enhancement because as we come to see teaching as a community activity that requires opening up teaching activities for collegial review and collaboration. Thus, helping faculty establish collegiality and collegueship becomes a key task in teaching development, as well as other aspects of academic development.

Viewing collegiality as lying at the intersection of various aspects of academic work offers us a fresh perspective on our roles as faculty developers. While existing literature on cultures of teaching and peer review of teaching, for example, makes arguments about the centrality of collegiality and collaboration for teaching enhancement, it falls short on proposals for how collegiality is manifested and promoted more generally, across various types of work. This essay analyzes several barriers to developing collegiality and offers examples of activities that might address those barriers at the level of individual faculty. In doing so, it also provides a framework that could be extended further. One could apply the same analysis at the level of schools and departments—analyzing both aids and barriers to collegiality and suggesting strategies to facilitate collegiality. Similarly, the concept could be applied more broadly at the level of universities, disciplines, or professional conferences, identifying aids and barriers to networking successfully within these contexts.

Thus, while this essay offers practical suggestions for faculty developers working with individual faculty, it also offers a new conceptual framework for analyzing the context of academic work based on an understanding of the key role played by collegiality and its potential for faculty development interventions and programs.

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