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“A Continuing Conversation on Teaching:” An Evaluation of a Decade-Long Lilly Teaching Fellows Program 1986-1996

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This study assesses what difference the Lilly Teaching Fellows Program at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst has made in its first ten years, both to the fellows who have participated in it and to the University community. Based on a survey of the fellows, the study concludes that the program has had significant positive effects on teaching skills and attitudes, collegiality, research and service. The study also assesses the seven major components of the Lilly Program and suggests ways in which they might be improved. The author then recommends increased institutional support for teaching to decrease the tensions between the programs' emphasis on teaching and institutional emphasis on research.

For the past ten years, faculty members at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst (UMass) have struggled with uncertainty in relation

to inadequate budgets, demanding tenure and promotion requirements and the place of teaching in their professional lives. Perhaps the one certainty has been that while they have struggled, thousands of students have passed through their classes.

Seventy of those faculty members have had the opportunity over these same ten years to participate in the Lilly Teaching Fellows Program. The program is intended to address some of the uncertainty inherent in faculty life at the same time that it helps faculty become better teachers and more productive members of the University community.

The University's Lilly Teaching Fellows Program began in 1986 as a three-year experiment in teaching improvement funded by the Lilly Endowment. That "continuing conversation on teaching," as one fellow called it, has been conducted for the past seven years by the Office of the Provost and the Center For Teaching (CFT). Norman Aitken, Deputy Provost, was the program's first director. Since 1988, it has been supervised by Mary Deane Sorcinelli, CFT Director and Associate Provost for Faculty Development.

The purpose of this study is to assess what difference, if any, the Lilly Teaching Fellows Program has made both to the fellows who have participated in it and to the University community. While the study does not attempt to measure the program's effect on students, it assumes that any positive effect on faculty and/or on the University would work to their benefit.

Nine classes of Lilly fellows, 70 participants in all, had completed the program by Spring 1995. Those fellows remaining at UMass were surveyed that summer and fall in order to assess the program's impact on fellows' careers, to inform the CFT and the broader campus community about the program's effectiveness, and to identify ways to enhance the program in the future.

What follows is a brief history of the Lilly Teaching Fellows Program, a description of the survey, key findings, discussion of the fellows' responses, and a series of recommendations that may be used to improve existing faculty development programs or to initiate new ones.

An Overview of the Teaching Fellows Program

Since 1974, the Lilly Endowment has sponsored a teaching fellows program to help junior faculty learn about, reflect on and improve teaching. While emphasis has been on individual faculty members' development of teaching expertise, the program also has aimed to encourage universities to promote excellence in teaching.

The Endowment has funded the program at more than 40 major universities, and about one-third of those institutions, including UMass, have agreed to assume financial responsibility and continue the programs beyond the initial three years. Their hope has been that the Lilly Teaching Fellows Program would be a worthwhile investment at a time when there has been increasing emphasis on the teaching mission at research universities, more recognition of the need for development of teaching expertise among faculty, and greater interest in strategies to help socialize faculty to the academy.

Although the Lilly programs vary from site to site, they typically involve six to eight pre-tenure faculty members from diverse disciplines who are appointed for one-year fellowships. Most have been at their institutions for one to five years. The programs themselves vary in emphasis from broad philosophical discussions of teaching to more practical applications of teaching methods. Some are highly structured, while others allow each year's class of fellows to set the agenda. Most include regular group meetings to discuss teaching, individual projects focused on teaching, mentoring by senior faculty, and release time from course work.

Components of the UMass program have come to include: a retreat in the spring prior to the Lilly year; release time from teaching, usually one course for each of two semesters; bi-weekly meetings with fellows; individual teaching projects; teaching consultations, which include assessment of syllabi and tests, class visits, videotaping and feedback from students; contact with a senior mentor; and the annual Celebration of Teaching dinner each spring. The dinner has been a culmination of the current Lilly year with each fellow speaking about what the experience has meant to him or her. It also has provided a look ahead to the next year as new fellows are introduced.

Interest in the program has remained high; about one in three to four of those nominated are accepted each year. Nominations number about 25 to 35, and the number of fellows in each class has ranged from six to ten.

The Survey

This study was designed to examine the impact of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst Lilly Program on fellows' teaching, research and service, career development and relationships with colleagues; to assess the components of the program; and to identify ways of enhancing both the program itself and the institutional commitment to excellence in teaching.

The survey was based in part on one used by Professor Ann Austin, who was then at the Peabody College of Vanderbilt University, in her study of all of the Lilly programs from 1974-1988. It included both open-ended questions and Likert-style items.

The fifty-nine Lilly fellows still on campus were surveyed. Thirty-seven fellows completed the questionnaires for a response rate of 63%. Responses to demographic data indicated that 78% of fellows are now tenured, and 60% are associate professors (see Figures 1 and 2). The remaining respondents were evenly split between full professors (20%) and assistant professors (20%). Some 53% were males and 47% females. Figure 1 indicates respondents' school of primary appointment; Figure 2, the year they began work at UMass; and Figure 3, their race or ethnicity.

It is important to note that the survey responses range over nine years of the Lilly Program, during which time the program has evolved significantly. Some responses, therefore, may reflect on aspects of the program that have changed or been refined over time. Fellows' responses are quoted throughout this report to illustrate its findings.

Summary of Key Findings

Teaching Skills and Attitudes

According to the large majority of respondents to this survey, the program has affected their teaching and career development in signifi-

FIGURE 1
Primary School Appointment

FIGURE 2
Year Faculty Member Began Work at UMass

FIGURE 3
Fellows' Race or Ethnicity

the program had a positive effect on their publication record. Every respondent reported a positive effect on their understanding of institutional issues, making them better citizens of the University community. One respondent said she thinks of fellows "as Lillies [committed to teaching excellence] first" and then as members of diverse departments and schools.

Lilly Program Components

Fellows reacted positively to elements included in the Lilly program, particularly the release time from teaching, the individual teaching projects and consultations provided by the CFT. At least three of four respondents reported that these aspects of the program helped them "very greatly" or "greatly". In contrast, the relationship with a senior mentor was rated "greatly" or "very greatly" helpful by one of four respondents.

Institutional Support for Teaching

Fellows expressed frustration with what some saw as the tension between the Lilly Program's emphasis on teaching and the institution's emphasis on research, in particular in the tenure and promotion processes. In other words, they saw the Lilly Program elevating the significance of good teaching while the campus culture generally ignored it or worse-punished those who made it a priority. The Lilly program "reminded me," one fellow wrote, "that teaching is what I enjoy most. Yet, it's what has become least important as the tenure clock ticks."

Survey Results: The Fellows' Experiences

The respondents wanted to be Lilly fellows primarily for the opportunity the program provides: (1) to improve their teaching and (2) to interact with others who value teaching. "Teaching is important to me," one wrote, "and I wanted to learn how to teach more effectively." Another said she was "feeling overworked and under-rewarded by a combination of teaching, research (tenure pressure), administrative duties and service" and needed time to think about what she was teaching. "I'd gone as far as I could on my own in figuring out how to improve my teaching," one fellow wrote, and another noted: "I wanted a collegial environment in which to deal with teaching issues, needed some fostering/nurturing myself and wanted to join a great group, meet new people and be part of a good thing."

Several respondents noted the excellent reputation of the program in relation to promoting good teaching as well as to "stimulating ideas and interchange between participants." One of the simplest responses seemed the best summary of why faculty wanted to be involved in the program: "I care about good teaching."

Impact on Teaching Career

All of the respondents (100%) reported that the Lilly Program had a positive effect on their overall ability as a teacher. Respondents also evaluated the impact of the program on several different aspects of their teaching careers. Those aspects included: philosophy of teaching,

course design, skills as a teacher, understanding of student learning, commitment to teaching, and collegial contacts (see Table 1).

Taking into consideration the percentage of respondents who indicated a "very great" or "great" impact, the Lilly program most affected their collegial contacts (84%), their course design (79%), their understanding of student learning (74%), their commitment to teaching (68%), their skills as teachers (66%), and their philosophy of teaching (63%). Ratings of "some" or "a little" impact appeared more often in the areas of philosophy of teaching (37%), skills as a teacher (34%) and commitment to teaching (31%).

The fellows were forceful and varied as they assessed the most positive effects of the program on their teaching. The fellowship "made me pedagogically self-conscious," one said. Others said that it opened up new horizons for their teaching and that they "felt more engaged in the entire enterprise of learning."

Several respondents talked about developing a new, more collaborative relationship with students that encouraged experimentation, openness, respect and trust. "My philosophy of teaching has changed such that I no longer see myself as a conveyor of information to my students but instead a collaborator in their learning," one fellow wrote. Another said: "I learned about the reciprocal relationship inherent in

TABLE 1
The Extent to Which the Lilly Program has had an Impact on My...

	Not at All	A Little	Some	Greatly	Very Greatly	Total	Ave. Resp.
	1	2	3	4	5		
Understanding of Student Learning	0%	8%	18%	24%	50%	100%	4.2
Collegial Contacts	3%	0%	13%	45%	39%	100%	4.2
Course Design	0%	3%	18%	42%	37%	100%	4.1
Commitment to Teaching	0%	5%	26%	21%	47%	99%	4.1
Philosophy of Teaching	0%	16%	21%	18%	45%	100%	3.9
Skill as a Teacher	0%	8%	26%	29%	37%	100%	3.9

teaching, that is taking myself out of the center and allowing students to reach each other and me."

Others talked about the program's positive effect on their teaching to different learning styles, using writing to learn, gaining a better appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism and building their confidence.

Several respondents said the most positive effect of the fellowship was the dialogue with colleagues who also value teaching. "I got to talk through common problems...that I otherwise might have been too embarrassed to admit were problems," one fellow wrote. Another said the most positive aspect was also the simplest: "discovering others who enjoyed teaching and talking about it—and not placing it on a lower rung than research."

Almost all the respondents said their involvement in the program had not had any negative impact on their teaching. A number also noted that the program's effects have been long-lasting and have permeated their teaching: "My reflections on teaching have lasted to this day."

Impact on Research

Most fellows indicated that the Lilly fellowship had a positive impact on their research and scholarship, in part because of the release time from teaching. Seventy-nine percent of respondents felt the program had either a "very" or "slightly" positive effect on their publication records. Several also talked about the close relationship between teaching and research and said the fellowship gave them opportunities to reflect on how their research could be used more effectively in their classes. A number of fellows said their mentors encouraged their research and that exposure to their colleague's research was helpful. By the same token, the largest group of fellows said the program had no effect on their presentation record at scholarly and professional meetings (50%).

Impact on Service

All respondents reported that the Lilly program had positively affected their knowledge of institutional issues and resources (100%)

and many said the program had positively impacted their service to their departments and the University. The responses conjure up a cadre of faculty members committed to teaching excellence on campus and working hard to help achieve it.

A number of fellows talked about presenting at Center For Teaching workshops. They also mentioned teaching-related work on the Chancellor's Teaching and Learning Task Force, the Council on Teaching, Learning and Instructional Technology, the Graduate Council, and the Faculty Senate. Many respondents noted increased time advising undergraduates, mentoring graduate students and serving as resources on good teaching in their departments and schools. Others mentioned participating to a greater extent in curriculum development and writing teaching-related grant proposals.

Many fellows noted that having been a Lilly fellow has made them more visible, thus increasing the likelihood that they are asked to act on their commitment to good teaching by serving in various capacities. One wrote: "The Program lets none of us escape."

Impact on Other Aspects of Professional Life

Fellows rated the effect of the Lilly Program on a number of other aspects of their professional lives. These included: overall professional development, interaction with other fellows, interaction with other faculty who are not fellows, mentoring other faculty, and credentials for tenure review (see Table 2).

The Lilly Program had a "slightly" or "very positive" effect on respondents' overall professional development as faculty members (100%), interaction with other fellows (92%), credentials for tenure review (84%), and assuming a mentorship role with new or pre-tenure faculty (77%). Fewer faculty reported the same positive effect on their interaction with faculty who had not been fellows (52%).

Since their fellowships, about a third of the respondents have continued interactions with other fellows to "some extent" and about a third to a "little extent." About one quarter have continued those relationships to a "great extent." Some of the relationships are professional, such as committee work or collaborative research projects, while others are social.

TABLE 2
What Kind of Effect Did the Lilly Program Have on Aspects of Your Professional Life

	Not Applicable	Very Negative	Slightly Negative	No Effect	Slightly Positive	Very Positive	Total	Average Response
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
My Overall Development as a Faculty Member	0%	0%	0%	0%	27%	73%	100%	5.7
My Ability as a Teacher	0%	0%	0%	0%	32%	68%	100%	5.7
My Interaction with Other Faculty Who Were Fellows	0%	0%	0%	8%	35%	57%	100%	5.5
My Knowledge of Institutional Issues	0%	0%	0%	0%	68%	32%	100%	5.3
The Credentials for My Mini-tenure/Tenure Review	6%	0%	0%	11%	28%	56%	101%	5.2
My Publication Record	0%	0%	0%	21%	41%	38%	100%	5.2
My Assuming a Mentorship with a New/Pre-Tenure Faculty	3%	0%	0%	21%	45%	32%	101%	5.0
My Interaction with Faculty who have not been Fellows	0%	0%	3%	46%	38%	14%	101%	4.5
My Presentation Record at Scholarly/Prof. Meetings	3%	0%	11%	50%	26%	11%	101%	4.3

One respondent said the fellows have an affinity for one another based on their interest in and commitment to teaching and undergraduates. "We are a network of support for one another and for values of teaching, collegiality and multiculturalism," she wrote. "Unfortunately, given budget pressures and challenges to these values...we may have to activate this network to stand for what we value."

Most have had some continuing interaction with the Center For Teaching. Many attend or participate in CFT workshops, serve in other capacities at the CFT's request and attend the Celebration of Teaching dinner. Fellows indicated great respect for the Center and a continuing appreciation of and admiration for its director.

More than half the respondents said their involvement in the Lilly Program had affected their career aspirations, largely through affirming their passion for and commitment to teaching. Others talked about a new level of commitment to advising, helping others improve their teaching and appreciating diversity. One person wrote: "In terms of my career, teaching well has become my number one priority, thanks to the Lilly program." Another said that the program has encouraged him "to try harder...and make a difference."

Many also indicated that the program had affected their tenure and/or promotion decisions. One fellow said the Lilly fellowship made it less likely that his teaching would be overlooked in the tenure decision. Another said: "I think [my tenure case was] enhanced because I was able to be more articulate about who I am as a teacher and scholar because of my Lilly year." Another wrote that she was promoted largely on the basis of her teaching "and the Lilly program helped me document it. I also won the Distinguished Teaching Award in part for the same reason."

Seventeen percent of the respondents said the fellowship had no effect on or was not applicable to the review process: "Tenure and promotion were based on research as always."

While a wide variety of positive effects were cited, virtually all respondents said the fellowship has had no negative effects on their careers. "For good or ill, it has made me feel more a part of the University because it has made me feel part of a group that shares core values about teaching, learning, and public education. That gives me energy and makes my every day seem worth it."

In the Best of All Worlds...

Fellows estimated how they currently divide their time among teaching, research and service and how, ideally, they would like to divide their time. The average percentage of time these thirty-eight faculty members spend on teaching is 44%, while they spend an average of 32% on research and 24% on service. Ideally, on average, they would like to spend slightly less time on teaching (39%), 10% more on research (42%) and less on service (19%). (See Figure 4) Slightly more than half the respondents (54%) said they would like to spend less time on teaching than they currently do. Almost a quarter (24%) said they were happy with the amount of time they currently devoted to teaching, while 22% said they would like to spend more time on teaching.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether their Lilly experience changed either the actual division of their time or their feelings about how they would like to spend their time. Some said their feelings had not changed, some said their desire to spend time on research increased, but most indicated that they devoted more time to teaching, particularly undergraduate teaching.

A number of respondents, however, seemed to feel that they spent increased time on teaching at their peril. They said they heard mixed messages—one from the Lilly Teaching Fellows Program and another from the University—and they were and are concerned about what they perceive as the campus' lack of support for and recognition of good teaching. "I increased the time spent on teaching-related activities," one fellow wrote. "This was due, in part, to the message of the Lilly program that teaching is important. However, at tenure time, the message was clear. Research is far more important." One respondent said the pressure of tenure allowed him no choice as to how he spent his time: "Research is number one, and I have to deal with that reality."

Promotion is another concern. "I am more oriented toward teaching and more comfortable with its taking time from research," one fellow wrote. "I only hope promotion committees feel likewise (but I doubt it)."

Rating Program Components

Respondents rated the extent to which each of seven components of the Lilly Program was helpful to them. Components included the retreat, release time from teaching, biweekly seminar with fellows,

individual teaching projects, teaching consultations, the mentor relationship and the Celebration of Teaching Dinner (See Table 3).

The Retreat. The goal of the annual retreat held each fall is to introduce the Lilly fellows to each other and to a rich environment of resources that they can incorporate into their individual plans for teaching enhancement. During the course of the two-day retreat, fellows work in informal groups and participate in several workshops, focusing on topics such as writing to learn and mentoring.

Some 65% of the fellows found the retreat helpful to a "great" or "very great" extent, with another 32% saying it was "somewhat" helpful. Respondents wrote that it provided "a relaxed opportunity to get the Lilly year off to an informed start and to build peer relationships" and "an opportunity for an intimate sharing of ideas and experiences" that served as an "invaluable introduction" to the program. Others said the retreat set the stage, tone and focus for the year and established a supportive atmosphere: "It really made me rethink and re-evaluate what I wanted out of my Lilly year."

Several fellows recommended that the retreat be moved from spring to fall semester. "Spring seems a time for closure, not new beginnings," one fellow wrote. Several fellows liked the sense of

TABLE 3
How Helpful were the Various Components of the Lilly Program?

	Not at All	A Little	Some	Greatly	Very Greatly	Total	Average Response
	1	2	3	4	5		
Release Time	0%	3%	14%	25%	58%	100%	4.4
Meetings with Fellows	0%	3%	24%	19%	54%	100%	4.2
Celebration of Teaching Dinner	3%	11%	28%	22%	36%	100%	4.2
Consultations	3%	9%	13%	28%	47%	100%	4.1
Teaching Projects	0%	11%	11%	32%	46%	100%	4.1
The Retreat	0%	3%	32%	30%	35%	100%	4.0
Mentors	8%	8%	57%	16%	11%	100%	3.1

getting away from campus embodied in the retreat, but others felt its purpose could be fulfilled on campus.

Release Time from Teaching. Each fellow gets a one-course release from teaching each semester to provide time for completing individual projects and participating in group sessions. Alternatively, fellows may take two courses off in one semester if they choose.

This aspect of the program was described in glowing terms: "the major benefit," "the key feature," "absolutely essential," "indispensable," "a rare luxury," "breathing space," "time to focus." Some 83% of the fellows found it helpful to a "very great" or "great" extent. "This was the first and only private time I got from anyone prior to my tenure decision," one wrote. Some 17% said the release time was helpful only to "a little" or "some" extent because the time was absorbed by other responsibilities. Still, the fellows' response to this aspect of the Lilly Program was the most positive. "It was wonderful," one wrote. "There is no greater gift than time."

Bi-weekly Seminar on College Teaching. The bi-weekly seminar on college teaching includes sessions on topics relevant to the fellows. Recent sessions have focused on: teaching through lectures, active learning methods, student learning styles, the diverse classroom, technology, mentoring and what students want. Several sessions also allow for sharing progress on individual projects and a year-end retrospective on what fellows have learned through the Lilly experience.

Response to the bi-weekly meetings also was positive, with 73% of fellows indicating that the meetings were helpful to a "very great" or "great" extent. Another 24% found them "somewhat" useful. The sessions were helpful both for the specific topics covered and for the sense of community gained and the development of a trusted group upon which participants could draw.

Respondents commented on the value of sharing thoughts, experiences and ongoing concerns with other fellows. Several noted that the meetings were their first real opportunity to get to know people outside their departments and experience collegiality across disciplines. "Up to this point," one wrote, "I went into my office in the morning and came out at night without really coming into contact with

people outside my department. These discussions educated me about the different cultures on campus."

Several also noted how the dynamic of each Lilly group, either positive or negative, related directly to their rating of the effectiveness of the seminar. Some reported tensions between focusing on teaching topics and on the issues of individual fellows: "The burdens of the semester and personal traumas of some fellows changed the texture of the meetings and they were not as productive as I hoped they might be."

Based on their responses, many of the fellows would agree with the one who said the meetings were "at the heart of the work." The meetings were "the key to establishing a Lilly consciousness in my academic life."

Individual Teaching Projects. Individual teaching projects vary widely. Some fellows choose to develop new courses over their Lilly year, while others revise existing courses. Some have taken the opportunity to re-work courses required by their departments. Some fellows complete their projects during the year, while others find that the work is on-going.

Response to the teaching projects was strong, with 78% of fellows saying they were helpful to a "great" or "very great" extent and 22% saying they were helpful to "a little or some" extent. Respondents called the projects a focus for the Lilly experience and an opportunity to apply the ideas learned, and several said the project allowed them to accomplish something needed but long postponed for lack of time. Another said she learned not only from her own project but from others' as well.

One recurring theme in these comments was that insights gained through the project were used effectively in other courses and for years to come: "I gained some new tools, new ideas, and fresh approaches for all my subsequent courses," one fellow wrote. Another said: "Four years after my fellowship, I will be making new use of the materials I developed as I continue to try to improve our undergrad courses." Several fellows did express caution about "building a course from scratch" because it took considerably longer than the Lilly year to complete their projects and to incorporate them into their departments.

Teaching Consultations. Opportunities for individual consultation, such as class visits, videotaping, and student feedback, were introduced during the third year of the Lilly program. The director of the Center for Teaching uses her own observations, evidence from taped lectures and student comments to discuss with the fellows ideas for enhancing their classroom experience.

About 75% of all fellows found the teaching consultations helpful to a "great" or "very great" extent. Those who took full advantage of this aspect of the program described it as "very helpful," "absolutely significant," "crucial," "incredibly helpful," "most helpful of all." "The consultations kept the feedback loops going between new ideas, putting them into practice and being able to examine how they were working or not working," one fellow wrote. Another commented: "The one-on-one complements all the other Lilly activities perfectly."

Several people mentioned CFT classroom visits and videotaping as being most helpful and they commented on how effective suggested remedies were. But a few said they lacked the confidence necessary to take advantage of the visits and videotaping: "I will long regret not seizing the moment." Others took advantage of every opportunity offered. "I did it all," one fellow wrote, "and everyone should be encouraged to do the same."

The Mentor. Fellows choose mentors with whom they establish working relationships and exchange insights about teaching, scholarship, and academic life. Senior faculty, many of whom are Distinguished Teaching Award winners and/or Lilly alumni, serve as mentors. Fellows generally set the parameters of the relationships, some meeting their mentors weekly and others only a few times during the year.

Fellows rated the mentor relationship as the least helpful of any program component. Some 57% said it was "somewhat" helpful and 16% said it was helpful to only "a little" extent or "not at all." At the same time, fellows seemed to recognize great potential in this relationship: many, for whatever reason, just did not experience it, and they were disappointed.

Some fellows said the mentoring relationship was nebulous and how they should choose a mentor was unclear. Many said their mentors

simply did not have enough time to spend with them. Others took the responsibility for not taking advantage of the relationship.

Some were clearly happy with their choices, describing their mentors in these ways: "an extremely valuable resource who I knew was there for me"; "provided friendship and constructive criticism"; "had a huge and enduring impact on my academic career."

Those who did not have such a positive experience clearly wished for it. They suggested a need for more guidance in selecting a mentor, a more structured relationship and additional written guidelines for the mentor. As one respondent lamented, "It's too good an opportunity to lose."

Celebration of Teaching Dinner. The highlight of the Lilly year is the annual Celebration of Teaching dinner, which brings dedicated teachers together to celebrate both the outgoing and incoming groups of Lilly fellows. Several hundred people attend the event, where mentors and others who contribute to the program are also recognized.

The dinner got high marks, with 58% of respondents finding it helpful to a "great" or "very great" extent and 28% finding it "somewhat" helpful. It was described as "uplifting," "keeping enthusiasm high," "a great culmination to a rewarding year," and "an oasis in a vast desert of other priorities." Worries about the dinner focused on the anxiety provoked because of the requirement to speak and on administrators' lack of support for teaching in their every-day actions in contrast to their once-a-year dinner remarks.

Many fellows said while they appreciated the dinner during their Lilly year, it really was in subsequent years that they came to value it for its creation of "community among faculty who value teaching." "It serves to recharge my batteries, renew my spirits and renew my ties with other teachers," one wrote. Fellows who find the dinner important feel that way to a strong degree. "This was one of the most wonderful nights of my professional life-and it continues to be," one fellow wrote. And another said: "It reminds me every year of what I'm about."

The Best of Times, the Worst of Times. . .

When the fellows were asked what was the best thing about their Lilly year, most said meeting other fellows and having the opportunity to improve their teaching. Many responses combined those ideas:

"Being part of a group whose reason for being is nurturing good teachers."

"The chance to make a community of inquirers to explore, share and examine the complexities of teaching. It is seldom in academia that there is protected and supported space and time to look at that which we do."

"The sense it engendered that we are still a community with a set of common goals and, more importantly, the will to accomplish them."

"Being part of a continuing conversation on teaching."

Other fellows said the best thing about their Lilly experience was the release time that allowed for introspection and research. Still others mentioned the opportunity to work with the CFT. One person said simply that the best thing about his experience was "having fun at work."

While there was much agreement on the best aspect of the Lilly experience, the fellows' least favorite aspect varied widely, though their most common regret was the tension between teaching and research. "The fact that I'm more conscious of what I do as a teacher causes me more stress when I have to sacrifice time that should be devoted to teaching for the opportunity to get research done," one fellow wrote, "because I still hear the reality is that being a good teacher will not get you promoted or tenure."

Other complaints were individualized, such as not following through on the teaching project, getting negative reaction from colleagues when sharing new ideas for teaching, or communicating ineffectively with a mentor. Many fellows said there was nothing negative about their Lilly year except that it was too short: "[The worst thing was] figuring out how to keep the Lilly glow going once the year ended."

Fellows' Final Thoughts

The fellows' parting words on these surveys seemed to fall into three categories: concern about what they see as a campus climate that does not support teaching; the pivotal role of Mary Deane Sorcinelli and Norman Aitken in the Lilly experience, and the possibility of a senior Lilly program in the future.

A number of fellows bemoaned what they see as the lack of University support for teaching, the emphasis on research and the lack of faculty development opportunities other than the Lilly program. They see the Lilly program as, one said, "an oasis in a desert" of indifference to teaching. "The Lilly experience is the first time in my eight years at the University that I felt a sense of community here," one fellow wrote. "It's probably the best thing the University ever did for me," another said.

Much of the reason for the sense of the Lilly program as an oasis stems from the devoted support of Aitken and Sorcinelli. one fellow wrote. "It was a privilege to learn from these individuals."

Many respondents suggested expanding the program to include as many faculty as possible, and a number specifically suggested a Senior Lilly Program that would give long-time UMass faculty the same opportunity to revitalize their commitment to teaching.

Recommendations

These recommendations, gleaned from the comments of the teaching fellows who responded to the survey, may be used to develop teaching improvement efforts like the Lilly Fellows Program or to improve current programs. Such programs, according to the fellows, should:

Pay attention in the fellows' selection to how each individual might interact with the group. If such programs are to fulfill their promise to participants, the group dynamic must be positive. By the same token, applicants might be asked about their interest in taking advantage of various aspects of teaching consultation with an eye to selecting those who seem most willing to participate fully.

Have a retreat at the beginning of fall semester. This would allow the fellows to prepare for their year as it begins. A one-day meeting

off-campus would seem to suit many of those who have experienced the retreat. A mini-retreat in mid-year would allow the fellows time to reflect on where they have been and where they would still like to go in their Lilly year. This would also give them some time to coalesce again, which seems to be so important to the success of any given group.

Offer the fellows advice, perhaps at the retreat, about how to handle their release time. This benefit of the program obviously was precious to them and too many fellows indicated that it was not used to greatest effect, in part because of external pressures to fill it with more departmental or University service. Former fellows might be asked to talk about how they protected and used their time. A letter to department chairs strongly urging that release time be respected might also help.

Encourage manageable projects, particularly ones that have implications for other courses that will be taught. Fellows' satisfaction with this aspect of the program seemed to be tied to their successful completion of the project and how relevant it was to other work. Here again, former fellows might be asked to talk about their projects-ones that were successful and ones that were not-at the retreat.

Help fellows form meaningful mentoring relationships. Potential mentors and fellows need information and orientation on what might constitute a successful relationship. It might be useful to ask three former fellows and their mentors to write a paragraph about how they viewed the relationship and how it worked for them and distribute that to each new group and to initiate discussion of the process at the retreat. A different model might be used: asking two to four master teachers to mentor an entire Lilly class. They could present at meetings, work informally with individuals or small groups, visit classes and act as resources in their areas of expertise for all the fellows. In this scenario, the mentors also could be given release time from teaching.

Educate the campus effectively as to the Lilly program's positive effect on fellows' teaching and overall career development. Some fellows indicated that department chairs and colleagues need to know about the program and how it furthers rather than hinders junior faculty development. This might be accomplished through a brochure featur-

ing some former fellows, coverage in campus publications or in a variety of other ways.

Initiate a Senior Lilly Teaching Fellows Program. Long-time faculty members desire and need the same opportunities for learning, sharing and rejuvenating their teaching that their junior colleagues enjoy. A few joint sessions with the two groups could be scheduled. Another benefit would be that the junior Lillies, as they suffer "Lilly withdrawal" when their programs end, could look forward to a possible second Lilly experience further along in their careers.

Increase institutional support for teaching. Fellows agree that the CFT through the Lilly Program-at modest cost and with a few staff members-has made a significant contribution to their ability to deal with the challenges of good teaching and its balance with research and service. While they believe recommendations such as these would further enhance the program, they also recognize that any program itself is limited in what it can do to promote teaching excellence without the continued and increased support of the larger university community and the administration.

To that end, perhaps the fellows' most significant recommendations were made to administrators. The need to improve teaching, the fellows agreed, is not just an individual or programmatic responsibility but an institutional one. They want to feel a part of an entire academic community committed to teaching excellence. Therefore, they recommend that administrators further foster a culture that emphasizes the value of good teaching by:

- rewarding teaching clearly and consistently in both tenure and promotion;
- allocating adequate resources to the pursuit of excellence in teaching;
- making an effort like the Lilly Teaching Fellows Program not "an oasis" but one part of a set of institutional policies and activities that emphasize teaching excellence; and
- tapping into the commitment and collective energy of former Lilly fellows or others like them to help achieve these goals.

The Lilly Program and its fellows already have played a major part in making UMass a better place for the students it serves and for the faculty that constitute its heart. The future success of such pro-

grams lies in their ability to help their universities' commitment to teaching excellence grow to match their own.

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