

# **Maximizing Campus Impact**

## **Lessons from the Trenches**

An NMC White Paper

## Introduction

The question of how best to serve its constituents arises for any organization that is part of a campus or community. While the details of who your clients are and what services you offer will naturally vary according to situation, organizations like yours share a common need to have a positive impact on campus, or in the community, in order to thrive. How can you assess whether your organization is impactful? Once you identify areas where improvement would be beneficial, how can you address them? Finally, how can you make sure that the campus community recognizes and values the contributions of your organization?

This guide addresses those questions. Drawing on the experience and expertise of directors of centers like yours, this guide discusses what it means to have impact; illustrates ways you can tell if you are having an impact on your campus; and presents seven strategies for maximizing impact. Case studies and examples from the NMC membership are included to inspire you. By sharing examples and strategies that have worked for others, we hope that the lessons learned by them will be of benefit to you.

Although the guide refers to *new media centers* and *technology centers*, it is worth noting that different organizations naturally have different structures. Some "centers" are located in a single building; others are distributed over the campus, united by purpose rather than by location. The term *center* is used for convenience and is intended to include any organization or group whose purpose is to assist the community in using technology in learning and teaching effectively and appropriately.

One way to use this guide is to identify the areas where your organization is not as strong, and focus on those in turn. Set explicit goals as you work toward implementing each strategy; for instance, if your organization could benefit from stronger allies among the campus community, make a list of areas where you might begin, and keep track of your progress as you build new relationships.

## Maximizing Impact: Seven Strategies for Success

The following seven strategies have been drawn from the work of Victor Edmonds of the University of California at Berkeley and Alicia Russell of Northeastern University, who developed the original sets of ideas for a panel presentation at the 2005 NMC Directors' Meeting. Much of the discussion presented here is based on comments of that panel, which also included Terry Patterson of the Art Center College of Design, and Nick Pumilia of Marquette University. In those and subsequent discussions with dozens of NMC Directors, these seven strategies were noted again and again as critical to success, and evolved into the framework for this effort. The strategies, generalized to be applicable to any New Media Center, are:

1. *Be focused.* Understand your organization's purpose and keep it in mind as you make decisions about what projects to work on, what services to offer, and whom to serve.
2. *Be adaptable.* Be open to changing needs and to changes in the community that affect your services.
3. *Be productive.* Create a portfolio of work that you can use to demonstrate the variety of skills and services available at your center.

4. *Make faculty allies.* Strong relationships among faculty – and with other departments on campus and in the larger community – will increase the effectiveness of your center.
5. *Set expectations.* Be clear about what your group can do, how much it will cost (if a cost is involved), and how long it will take. Make sure your clients are aware of the range of services you can offer.
6. *Make your boss's goals your goals.* Find out what the larger campus priorities are and align your work with those.
7. *Use your power.* Be a strong, positive voice on campus, especially when there are problems that need solving.

It is clear that no single strategy will lead to impact, a point underscored by each of the case studies included here. The seven strategies must be employed in concert, as part of an ongoing planned effort, in order to have an impact on the campus at multiple levels. Each case study, though it may emphasize one or another of the strategies, includes evidence of one or more of the others as well.

Obviously, finding a campus-wide need and working to address it is one way to have impact, as the New Media Center at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University discovered when it took part in a campus-wide visioning strategy. The Center reports:

"Recognizing the importance of a cross-disciplinary alliance to link learning to contemporary issues, the university called a general faculty meeting with the board of trustees. The goal was to address the need for an interdisciplinary university that looks at the problems of higher education in a new light. From this meeting, the Futures Committee was created. The Committee articulated its vision as follows:

*"North Carolina A&T State University is a learner-centered community that develops and preserves intellectual capital through interdisciplinary learning, discovery, engagement, and operational excellence.*

"The effect on campus has been overwhelming. As a result of articulating this vision, many interdisciplinary centers for learning, research and creative work have been established. In fact, one academic program, a Ph.D. degree in Energy and Environmental Studies, has been approved by the North Carolina Assembly. The departments involved are mechanical, electrical, chemical, and civil engineering; political science; journalism and mass communication; and biology."

Small steps can be very effective, too. At St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas, the observation that students were not fully participating in the larger classes led to a decision to try a pilot test of the Classroom Performance System (a personal response system). After the pilot, which ran in four classes, a professor reports:

"Students were definitely enthusiastic about using the 'clickers.' They noted in evaluations that they felt more involved, paid closer attention to lecture, and simply enjoyed class more. They also used CPS when they did group presentations. Class discussions were more lively and interactive, and students and faculty found it helpful

to be able to assess student comprehension on the spot. Faculty were able to go over material again when it was needed. Classroom attendance also improved."

This small pilot test also revealed some issues that would need to be addressed before CPS would be implemented campus-wide; but the act of setting up the pilot and collecting data on how it was received, a relatively small move, will have a definite impact on many of the courses offered at the university.

## Strategy #1: Be focused

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Having a strong focus, and knowing what it is, will guide your organization as questions arise about what projects or initiatives to work on and what services to offer. Setting goals and articulating the principles that guide your organization will help refine and clarify your focus. One outward sign of focus is a clearly stated mission, which serves as a point of reference for decisions about where to cut back and where to take risks. Another indication of focus is that your center's goals align with its mission, and those goals are being reached.

A focused center has a home base: an understanding of its core purpose that serves as a point of reference from which it can branch out in new directions, and to which it can retreat when regrouping is necessary. An understanding like this enables staff to be comfortable when handling requests, to know what services are part of the center's portfolio, and to be able to articulate offerings and opportunities to faculty and other clients. When requests must be turned down, staff will be able to be clear about why. They may be better able to offer alternatives that either align with the focus of the center or allow the center to grow in ways that are in harmony with its core purpose.

During the conversations surrounding this topic, directors were clear that while it is sometimes necessary to turn down requests, it is important to listen fully to the client and be certain to understand the problem first. Then explain why you must say no, without being negative. If possible, suggest alternative solutions that address the issue; try not to be a "dead end." Successful centers make sure that clients always leave with an answer – even if it is not the answer they had in mind when they arrived with a question.

Finally, a focused center attracts top-quality staff. Prospective employees see that the staff are effective and valued and that their work has meaning and makes a difference. Staff are free to do what they do best, whatever their area of expertise may be, because the boundaries are clear.

## How to Get There: Suggestions from Directors

Whether or not your organization already has a mission statement, take a moment to consider the following questions:

- *How does your center fit in to the overall situation of your campus? What is your campus like? Is it a research school, a teaching school, or a combination? What is the campus mission? Who make up the student population? The faculty population? Imagine these people as your user base, and consider the problem from a product-development angle. If these are your customers, what needs are they likely to have that you can supply? Understanding*

the culture of your campus will help you anticipate faculty needs and design your focus so that the services you offer will directly address those needs.

- *What coming trends in educational technology are likely to affect your clients?* A little environmental scanning will help keep your center agile. Keep abreast of advancements in educational technology, and changes in pedagogy practices, so that you can introduce effective pilot programs that don't disrupt your focus.
- *Which of the technologies that you currently support are beginning to see less use?* Keep track of support requests and be aware when demand for certain services or technologies declines. Be prepared to phase out underused technologies gently. From time to time, review your center's services and supported systems to make sure that they remain in line with your focus.
- *Where does your organization shine?* Play to your strengths, especially where those strengths align with campus needs. Make it a priority to identify and meet faculty needs, and make sure that you have people on staff with expertise in those areas.

After considering these questions, take the time to condense your focus into a short statement, or review your existing mission statement and revise it if necessary. The most important part of the mission statement may be the act of writing it; this exercise can be an opportunity for the center's staff to think deeply about the purpose of the organization, the direction it is currently heading, and the direction it ought to be heading. With your mission statement at hand, evaluate your current projects and services. Do they align with your focus? Expand or replicate those that do and consider phasing out those that are missing the mark – or rethink your focus.

## **Case Study**

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### **Case Western Reserve University Creates Faculty Outreach Program**

*With a staff of three serving hundreds of faculty, ITAC created a program that increased their visibility, expanded their clientele, and established a solid reputation for the department among the faculty. Here is the story in their own words. (See also [www.case.edu/its/itac/](http://www.case.edu/its/itac/))*

#### **The Situation**

The department of Instructional Technology and Academic Computing (ITAC) at Case is part of Information Technology Services (ITS) and is charged with providing support for faculty to enable them to integrate technology into teaching and learning processes. One of the biggest challenges faced by ITAC is getting people to use the services offered. The problem is threefold:

- Making faculty aware of services
- Building trust with faculty
- Providing services to faculty

The problem is compounded by the fact that there are over 800 faculty at Case.

### **The Action Taken**

In response to this problem, ITAC's Faculty Support Group created the Faculty Outreach Program. The Faculty Support Group is made up of 3 staff members under the Faculty Support Group Manager:

- The Instructional Designer
- The Instructional Technology Coordinator
- The Creative Director of New Media

The academic departments were divided across the 3 staff members with each staff member becoming the department liaison, responsible for each faculty member within that department.

Each liaison has "Invitations" to give out to Faculty. These invitations not only outline the services offered by ITAC but give each faculty member the personal contact information for the liaison (phone, email, and even a photo). The invitations were part of a well-developed communication plan. They are attractively glossy and oversized (4"X6") so that they are not easily filed away with commonplace business cards. As a result, we have observed that the invitations are being placed where they belong, next to faculty computers or on their desks.

The liaisons take both a top-down and bottom-up approach. The first approach is to contact the Department Chairs and get invited to Faculty Meetings to introduce ITAC and the outreach program. The second is to contact faculty anywhere they can be encountered (mostly through networking), resulting in word-of-mouth recommendations through the faculty.

The Faculty Support Group staff members still continue with their primary responsibilities – for instance, one staff member arranged to put on a Blackboard workshop for the Dance department that was then given by a different staff member who was trained in Blackboard. The Faculty Liaison may not personally possess the skills or resources that the faculty need, but can serve as a facilitator that coordinates, refers, and schedules them with appropriate personnel. This significantly reduces the burden on faculty to find the right person or resource which can be costly in terms of time and satisfaction with our services.

For the most part the services offered are free, though we do promote some of the pay-for services that the department offers. We are very clear about what goes beyond basic support and into the realm of a special project that needs allocated resources.

### **The Effect on Campus**

The response has been overwhelming. The department Chairs have welcomed us to attend their faculty meetings and it is not unusual to get a call with a question or two the same day from some of the faculty who were in attendance.

We are measuring the volume of contacts but also the volume and type of responses. For instance, we track the number of workshops or one-on-one sessions requested. It is worthy of note that while attendance at our faculty workshops and seminars was not high in the past, after the initiation of our faculty outreach program, demands for training and resultant

attendance have increased significantly. We attribute some of the success to the trust and communication we have developed through the faculty outreach initiative.

It is very much a divide-and-conquer approach – to offer support one department at a time, one faculty member at a time, and raise the bar of instructional technology use.

### **Tips for Other Centers**

Less is more. You don't have to commit to a project to help a faculty member – sometimes it is enough to be a source of information. This type of support scales up pretty easily because one-on-one support can quickly turn into mini groups or even workshops. It is important to let them know what you are and aren't selling right away. Sometimes it's best to get past what services DO require funding and then focus on what you can do today.

Finally, it's only useful to build the faculty trust if you are not going to abuse it. Follow-up is essential not only on your own actions but on people you might hand them off to as well.

### **Additional Comments**

We believe that, while there are still novices, most faculty at Case are ready to move beyond button-pushing and mouse-clicking support. Our focus has evolved into three areas: teaching and learning, or pedagogy before technology; emerging technologies; and assessment and evaluation.

There has been a refreshing change in the direction of faculty interest and requests for assistance from "how do I set up my wiki or blog" to "how might I use a wiki or blog in my courses?" There has also been an acceptance by our faculty that we are the "go to" people when it comes to testing and recommending new media or emerging technologies. In the words of one faculty member, "I no longer have to worry about the latest and greatest; we have people here at Case that do that for us."

Finally, we have begun to create a culture of assessment and evaluation in all we do. As part of trust building beyond being there for them, faculty want to know if this "stuff" works. Only by using a consistent, well-thought-out plan for assessing and evaluating technology and communicating the results, will we be able to maintain a trusting and lasting relationship with them. The Faculty Outreach Initiative at Case takes us one step closer to our goal.

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## **Strategy #2: Be adaptable**

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Successful organizations possess adaptability: the power to meet changing demands without losing focus. Whether dealing with revisions to project-specific requirements or a shift in the political climate of an entire campus, an adaptable organization is one with the agility to react to, address, and even anticipate necessary changes as they arise. The rewards of adaptability include continued usefulness as a campus resource; the ability to take advantage of opportunities to grow; and stronger relationships with clients, all of which contribute to greater impact.

Although on the surface they may seem to be in opposition, the qualities of adaptability and focus together provide a strong foundation for an organization. In practice, adaptability means working with clients as their needs change over time. Having a strong focus will help as decisions are made about how to handle those changing needs. Working from a firm understanding of the center's purpose, staff will be able to suggest approaches and handle modifications that do not conflict with the center's goals. The same holds true when adapting to external changes, such as new legislation affecting educational institutions or a new administration. In a case like this, a strong focus will help the organization remain true to its mission while also adjusting to different requirements and ideas.

Adaptability is equally important when an organization expands. Attracting new constituents includes understanding and being able to meet their needs, which may be quite different from the needs of current clients. An adaptable organization will be able to offer services that are desirable to potential clients. During the process of relationship-building, flexibility on the part of the center's staff may help to establish trust.

## How to Get There: Suggestions from Directors

On a day to day basis, remain open to new ideas. If you find yourself doing something a certain way because it has "always" been done that way, spend a little time brainstorming new approaches. By incorporating adaptability into the everyday operations of your organization, you will create a culture of flexibility.

- *Listen carefully to your clients and prospective clients.* Listen to what people are actually asking for, rather than making assumptions or drawing conclusions. Ask questions to draw out the details and explore possibilities. If clients are looking for services which go beyond your focus, find an ally who can help at the moment and consider training or retraining to be able to meet similar needs in the future.
- *Make professional development a priority for your staff.* Technology advances rapidly, and it is important to be adaptable enough to stay abreast of changes in the field. Provide opportunities for staff to improve existing skills and develop new ones; encourage attendance at conferences, workshops, and online trainings; and allow time for staff to keep up with trade journals and experiment with new software.
- *Be opportunistic and entrepreneurial.* The atmosphere at a start-up company is charged with energy – partly because by its very nature, a new organization needs to be adaptable. Use adaptability to your advantage by keeping an eye out for new opportunities and seizing them when they come along. Be aware of what is happening at other universities, so that you can offer comparable services and so that you can identify areas where your center can be particularly innovative.
- *Re-evaluate your organization's focus from time to time.* Consider including a focus review at a yearly staff retreat. Go over projects and services from the past year, comparing them to your stated focus. If the results indicate that your core offerings are shifting, consider updating your focus – or changing the projects you select – to realign your goals with what your unit is actually doing.

## Case Study

### Bowling Green State University Takes Advantage of Student Resources by Creating Hot Groups

*An insight into the potential of student work in the areas of research and development results in a unique learning opportunity for students. Here is the story, as told by the Digital Media Research Group at Bowling Green State University. (See also [flash01.bgsu.edu/index.html](http://flash01.bgsu.edu/index.html))*

#### The Situation

Students are often asked to do repetitive and mundane work while attending our universities; yet without intellectual challenges, we cannot recruit the best and brightest to our institutions. A university that cannot engage their students will not retain them long. We saw a need to create learning environments that are compelling and exciting and that open the doors to intellectual curiosity. BGSU relies on the potential of engaged student learners in research and development. New media centers offer the perfect environment to spawn something magic: The Hot Group.

#### The Action Taken

"A *hot group* is what the name implies: a lively, high-achieving, dedicated group, usually small, whose members are turned on to an exciting and challenging task. Hot groups, while they last, completely captivate their members, occupying their hearts and minds to the exclusion of almost everything else. They do great things fast."

– Harold J. Leavitt and Jean Lipman-Blumen, *Hot Groups* (Oxford University Press: 2001)

We were very fortunate at BGSU to have a large program of nearly 500 majors in Visual Communication Technology, all of whom are required to complete three full semesters of paid co-op work. In addition we had created an exclusive service learning experience for the very brightest freshmen called the Digital Magicians. This was open to about 5% of our freshmen based on a portfolio review and on interviews by upperclassman managers. After a full semester of real-world experience, these students were again selectively invited to interview with the Digital Media Research Group.

The students in the Digital Media Research Group come from different disciplines including visual communication technology, computer science, and art. Perhaps the overriding characteristic is their instinct for solving ill-defined problems as a group. They are often asked to work, with little or no guidance, on problems for which the path to success is only vaguely visible. What has evolved is a group that pumps out astonishing ideas, debates passionately, and works beyond expectations.

#### The Effect on Campus

Sustaining projects that span multiple years presents a challenge to an all-student work group. We have solved this to a great degree by hiring students in overlapping semesters. Students have continued to work beyond the required co-op period as well. Having students working 20 hours per week and attending classes at odd hours of the day presents additional challenges in communication. From the start we have used a progress seminar each week to

report from every student as to the challenges they face. Having everyone informed about everyone else's work has been part of the success of the DMRG.

The DMRG for the past year has been actively working with scholars from music, art, computer science, and electronics technology to create a new synergy on the BGSU campus. Already research projects and thesis work are being generated because of our student groups. This has led to additional funding and even new space for our efforts.

### **Tips for Other Centers**

We are seeing New Media Hot Groups emerging in both industry and universities. The power of engaging students in this enterprise cannot be overlooked. They are the key to accomplishing far more than we ever could without them.

The greatest resource a university has is the intellectual power residing in members of the learning community. Media groups are a perfect environment to unleash the intellectual power of our students for research and development.

If you would like to start your own Hot Group, keep in mind:

- Hot groups can be diverse in almost all things - except standards of thinking.
- Members of hot groups exercise their whole brains, actively and continuously.
- Hot groups like their own physical space.

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## **Strategy #3: Be productive**

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Productivity is an obvious strategy for success: the more you do, the more people you have a chance to reach. Impactful centers are productive in particular ways; the type of work done is as important as the volume produced. Strategic projects that have a wide-ranging effect, such as those that can be applied across courses or disciplines, will increase a center's impact on campus. Projects that can be reused or repurposed in whole or in part also have greater impact than custom, one-off solutions.

To maximize the beneficial effects of productivity, look for areas where a single, generalized solution will serve many people. For example, rather than creating individual learning objects for faculty, investigate authoring tools that your center could support, build, or modify to meet the needs of your faculty. Offering training and support for a good tool will allow your center to reach more faculty and work on more projects than building individual learning objects by hand.

It is not enough to only be productive, even if your center consistently turns out high-quality, strategic solutions. You must also show off what you do. Take steps to ensure that your center's accomplishments are reported and celebrated. To extend the success of this strategy, highlight what your clients are doing because of your help, rather than focusing the attention on the center itself. Showcase faculty projects, share success stories in the campus newsletter, and host an open house where the demonstrations are given by enthusiastic faculty.

## How to Get There: Suggestions from Directors

As a starting point, take stock of where you are. List the various projects or programs your center is involved in; ask the people who come through to fill out a questionnaire before they leave, or send out brief follow-up surveys, to describe how the results of your work will be used, and by whom; ask key people on campus to list your center's positive contributions, to get a sense of how you are perceived on campus. Request a professional program assessment, if you have access to personnel trained in that area. Once you have identified the areas that need work – whether raising awareness, refocusing efforts on more appropriate projects, or celebrating accomplishments – develop a plan to address it.

- *Select projects that are strategic.* When you are approached by individual faculty, look for a way that the solution to one problem can be applied to others. In the world of software development, code is often reused to save time and effort. Apply the same principle to your work whenever possible. Look for solutions that address a campus- or system-wide need.
- *Build a portfolio of success.* Create tearsheets for each of your projects or services. Include a description of what the project is, who will use it, and the work your center is doing; ask clients to give testimonials that you can include. Create annual reports that show off your accomplishments. Keep a gallery of current work online that you can point to when potential clients come to call.
- *Market your organization to the campus and to the educational technology community.* Market your center by sharing what you've been doing and what you can do. Make it easy for clients to find you and to understand what services you offer. Presentations at conferences and workshops can broaden your audience, and word of mouth is great advertising. Carefully prepared, professional-looking materials will also be beneficial: if your staff does not include a graphic designer, consider hiring one to prepare materials that you plan to distribute, whether in print or online. As is the case with any brand, a center's image is closely tied to its marketing materials.
- *Host events that benefit your clients.* Making your presence known through workshops, training sessions, and other events will help highlight productivity. A carefully planned yearly open house, advertised well in advance, gives your center the opportunity to share projects with the campus community and provides an excellent venue for introducing yourself to new faculty.

## Case Study

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### University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Creates Teaching Enhancement Center

*Perceiving a need for a single source of information and support for faculty who want to learn how to use technology and how to use it in teaching, the Office of Instructional Development at UCLA established the Teaching Enhancement Center. Here is the story in their own words. (See also [www.oid.ucla.edu/FNMC](http://www.oid.ucla.edu/FNMC))*

### **The Situation**

UCLA has a distributed set of independent IT resources and the Office of Instructional Development (OID) sought a means to assist the campus by providing resources in the form of equipment and personnel to augment local resources or offer assistance where resources were scarce. The distributed campus works to locate and balance expertise, resources, and approaches across many disciplines and departments, resulting in a dynamic environment, a strong community of varied support and experience, and a situation where best-of-breed solutions are able to flourish.

In addition, OID administers the campus TA training program, course evaluation, faculty development, classroom services, media production and the media library, and these complimentary services enable OID to approach instruction and technology in a holistic manner.

### **The Action Taken**

OID created the Teaching Enhancement Center, a drop-in center designed to embrace the use of technology in teaching. Not only has OID equipped TEC with scanners, video decks, recording equipment and other technologies, they hired a TEC staff with broad experience in teaching and technology. The center staff work closely with the Faculty Development Coordinator, creating a one-stop, drop-in facility where faculty can not only learn about new technologies, but gain an appreciation of their pedagogical application.

### **The Effect on Campus**

In the 16 months since TEC has been opened, our impact on campus may best be measured by our accomplishments. In addition to holding over 400 individual appointments with clients in our Center, we have developed and shared our resources and materials with the campus through our website and participation in a number of cross-campus committees, such as a Digital Learning Objects Taskforce with the library, three Blended Instruction Initiatives with three different departments, and active participation in UCLA's Sakai pilot project. Thus, the scope of TEC's work runs the gamut from individual, project-based assistance to larger-scale course redesign.

### **Tips for Other Centers**

Build a staff with great, curious people; provide guidance and direction based on sound instructional technology philosophies and principles; and encourage an environment of sharing and community. We have found that working closely with the IT resources in the various departments helps keep all sides of a project informed and on target regarding both pedagogy and the technology of choice.

Additionally, although it may require more experimenting and dedication, we have found that using open source software has helped the center develop at a lower cost-risk than if we had chosen commercial software. We have seen an associated growth in staff expertise with the need to understand technology in a more comprehensive way.

## Strategy #4: Make faculty allies

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Faculty are an important resource for a new media center, both as clients and as a sales force. On many campuses, one of the benchmarks of success for new media centers is how useful the center is to faculty. Faculty allies can speak for you, market you to potential clients, and help you showcase your productivity. Many, perhaps most, of the projects that you do will be centered on faculty needs. Requesting additional staff or equipment is also easier when you can demonstrate a direct benefit to faculty.

As is true with any form of relationship-building, creating alliances with faculty takes time; but the time you invest will be worth it when you have a strong community of support for your services. With a supportive pool of clients supplying word-of-mouth advertising, your unit will be in a better position to be productive. Marketing will be easier, the campus community will know what you offer, and your organization's value to the campus will be demonstrated daily.

Although they are an important resource, faculty are not the only allies you should cultivate. Make a point of being familiar with departments like computer science, arts, media, and communications: students in these departments, both graduate and undergraduate, might be interested in internships or contract work. They can connect you with events and news that might not come your way from other sources.

You may also find it helpful to connect with other campus departments that offer services that complement yours. Printing centers, A/V departments, photo and sound studios, and the like are useful allies, not only for work your department may need, but also as a way to meet clients' needs that your unit cannot otherwise fill. Alliances can also be formed with groups outside the immediate university; look to local art and technology centers for interesting partnerships. And of course, other NMC members may already have a solution to a problem you are just beginning to encounter.

### How to Get There: Suggestions from Directors

The surest way to create faculty allies is to consistently deliver products and services that meet their needs. Focus on customer service, keeping in mind that most faculty want to go about their teaching and research with technology helping rather than getting in the way. When you work on faculty projects, involve the faculty in ways that take advantage of their domain expertise, without requiring them to learn technology for its own sake. Don't "dumb it down," and certainly offer as much training and support as may be needed or wanted; but remember that faculty are experts at teaching and in their subject areas, and their interest in technology is usually secondary to those pursuits.

- *Make it easy for faculty to take advantage of your center's services.* Like everyone else, faculty have constraints on their time. Offer flexible hours that allow them to come in when it is most convenient for them. Consider the way your space is set up; some faculty will prefer to work privately, especially when they are getting help, while others may be more gregarious. Make it easy to make appointments or get drop-in access. If possible, meet faculty in their offices. Tailor your offerings to faculty needs; faculty may want help writing the technical needs section of grants or disseminating their research effectively. Make a

point of inviting new faculty to visit your center so that you are on their minds as they settle in.

- *Listen to what faculty have to say.* When faculty come to you with a request, ask questions, and really listen to the answers. They may not be able to clearly articulate the technical aspects of a problem, but they can probably tell you the effect they want. Be open to suggestion. Faculty value technical staff who are able to hear and address pedagogical or research concerns. Involve them in the solution; faculty are natural content experts. You will not only gain a better understanding of the problem by delving deeper into the subject – you might find possibilities for solutions that would not have occurred to you otherwise.
- *When you talk to faculty, speak a common language.* Speak naturally and avoid technical jargon. This seems obvious, but when technical people get excited about a project, they naturally begin thinking about interesting technical solutions. Those conversations are better for staff to have together; when you are meeting with faculty, use terminology from the faculty's domain and avoid overly technical references. If you have to turn down a technically unfeasible request, explain briefly and suggest an alternative without getting too technical. Respond promptly to email and inquiries; everyone likes to be called back.
- *Have faculty train other faculty.* You can cultivate your relationship with faculty by arranging training sessions where faculty train other faculty. The faculty trainers will enjoy showing off their projects and skills, and the faculty learners will see that you don't have to be a "techie" to succeed. It's also excellent public relations; when someone else toots your horn, the music's sweeter.
- *Acknowledge faculty work to their deans.* When you showcase your center's projects, showcase the faculty as well. Emphasize the part faculty have played in developing the idea and carrying out the work. After each project is completed, consider writing up a brief announcement for the campus newsletter or sending an illustrated letter to the dean(s) of the faculty who were involved. When you host an open house, set up kiosks showcasing your projects and invite faculty to run them. Make sure your invitation list includes the deans, and include a personal note on their invitations mentioning which of their faculty will be part of the open house.
- *Cultivate other allies as well.* When forging non-faculty allies, consider personal visits. Drop by and introduce yourself, and be sure to have copies of your marketing materials on hand. Ask questions; find out what each department is especially proud of, and what each is best at. Share the same information about your unit and invite their staff to visit your center. When you host an open house, make a point of including staff from campus and outside organizations on your invitation list. When a client has a problem that you can't help with, make sure you know who can help and how to reach them. Be a point of contact so that faculty can come to you, no matter what they need, and get an answer. Don't overlook academic departments that can augment your services; interns from computer science, arts, and business may be able to contribute to projects to supplement your regular staff.

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## Case Study

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### RIT's Teaching and Learning Technology Lab Offers an Open House that Shows Off Their Strengths

*To demonstrate their strengths to faculty – and to the campus as a whole – the TLT planned a friendly, approachable event that showcased TLT's offerings and also gave faculty a taste of what else they could do.*

*Here is the story in their own words. (See also [distancelearning.rit.edu/faculty/lab/](http://distancelearning.rit.edu/faculty/lab/))*

#### **The Situation**

Faculty at RIT do not always know where to turn when they are interested in learning how to integrate technology into their teaching. Online Learning needed a way to expose faculty to the myriad of services we provide to all faculty – not just distance learning faculty. Online Learning has a Teaching and Learning Technology Lab (TLT) which is a resource for faculty to develop their skills in online instructional techniques, to learn to create digital instructional materials, and to receive comprehensive training on a variety of educational technologies. We wanted to create a non-threatening, low stakes event to expose faculty to the variety of hardware and software solutions we had. More importantly, we wanted to expose them to the strong team of instructional designers and technologists that are here to guide them and assist in transforming their teaching.

#### **The Action Taken**

In 2001, Online Learning offered its first "Tech n' Treat." The week of Halloween, we picked one day and extended an invitation to all faculty to attend an open house of Online Learning and the TLT Lab. At each workstation in the lab, faculty could learn a variety of software tools from PowerPoint to Photoshop. Faculty could create and manipulate digital images or create short streaming video clips. Some hands-on activities were light – the first year, we demonstrated instant messaging as a way to communicate with students, or other faculty and staff. Last year, Online Learning staff did two stand-up presentations on our most popular tool: Clipboard, a versatile and robust survey tool. The tool was created internally by Online Learning technologists and co-op students and has seen widespread adoption since presentations began.

This year, we will increase the choices for faculty, allowing them to work in our self-serve studio and capture digital audio and video clips and create annotated presentations. The workstations will provide hands-on training in RIT's course management system – myCourses (Desire2Learn), RoboHelp, Captivate, the Clipboard survey tool, streaming video, and Macromedia Breeze. In addition, stand-up presentations will be given to demonstrate student response systems, Breeze web conferencing and the Clipboard survey tool.

#### **The Effect on Campus**

Each year we see an increase in the number of attendees and we anticipate this year to be our largest ever. An exciting example was the presentation of Macromedia Breeze last fall. The single presentation brought in over 25 faculty; as a result, we had more faculty wanting to use the tool in creative and innovative ways than we could support, since fall was a pilot time for us. It was the first time we had to turn faculty away from a pilot. The Tech n' Treat workshops

have aided Online Learning in steering our distance learning faculty away from recreating the stand-up lecture online and have demonstrated ways for them to create digital learning objects that can be used in many dynamic ways in the distance and on-campus environment. The attendees were also surveyed and over 90% of the faculty attendees rated their experience at Tech n' Treat as "Very Satisfied" or "Satisfied."

### **Tips for Other Centers**

Make it fun and non-threatening, and provide lots of support for faculty to actually create or work with a tool. Use the opportunity to make connections for potential projects. Offer and provide follow-up support. Attempt to reach out and personally invite the *unusual suspects*!

Be prepared for requests from non-academic units to use your tools. A constant challenge for RIT Online Learning has been to prioritize our limited resources to support both academic and non-academic use of tools. For example, an administrator wanted to use Breeze to conduct job interviews. This required training, support and dedicated licenses. We are a service unit and we try to accommodate all users but we do need to define policies internally to assist our team in knowing how to prioritize requests.

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## **Strategy #5: Set expectations**

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Setting expectations involves explicitly defining what your organization does, and clearly communicating it to clients and stakeholders. As part of a coordinated plan to increase impact, the strategy of setting expectations works best in concert with others outlined above: a focused center will be able to define its services, fee structures (if applicable), clientele, and boundaries; a center with strong allies will have channels through which to communicate, in general terms, what potential clients and stakeholders may expect of the organization; and an adaptable center will be able to adjust on those occasions where, despite the best attempts at setting expectations, differences turn up in the middle of a project.

When your staff understand your organization's mission and the scope of services offered, and when these are communicated clearly to potential clients and stakeholders, there will be a strong match between the proposals you receive and the goals of your organization. Simply by being clear about what your center can and cannot do, you can reduce misunderstandings and create an atmosphere of trust between your clients and your staff.

It is not uncommon for a new media center to offer a variety of services or to work on very different projects, and it can be difficult for staff to explain to newcomers exactly what it is that the center can do. Time invested in defining your organization's focus – and in making sure that staff understand and agree with it, and can explain it clearly – will avoid time wasted in unproductive meetings where you are asked for services you cannot provide.

A new media center needs to set expectations on several levels, from individual interactions with clients all the way up to the organization's presence within your institution. With each client, and for each project, there will be expectations about who will do the work and what work will actually be done. Even before a client walks in your door, he or she may have expectations about your center based on what has been said by previous clients, or what

appears in your marketing materials. Make sure that what is being said about your organization is what you want others to hear.

## How to Get There: Suggestions from Directors

Start from within; work from your focus. Develop an "elevator speech" about your organization – a two-breath description of what you do that can be delivered, if necessary, on a short elevator ride (hence the name). Encourage your staff to learn a version of the elevator speech so that whenever any of you describes the organization, you are essentially using the same description.

When you meet with clients, listen to what they have to say, and let them know up front how your staff can help. Define the deliverables right at the beginning so that both parties know what to expect when the project is finished. Sometimes a problem that seems to be outside the scope of what you can do can be reframed; sometimes not. If you really are not able to help, suggest alternatives, but don't promise what you can't deliver. Be consistent from client to client; word gets around, and playing favorites can undermine trust.

Set expectations across the campus or institution by marketing your organization in terms that clarify your services. When you write reports or prepare brochures and flyers, emphasize what you want the campus to know about your center. Provide your boss with ammunition so that he or she can speak confidently about what you offer to the institution.

As you and your staff prepare these materials, consider the following questions:

- *What basic services do you offer? What about specialized services?* When a client comes to your door, what can he or she expect? Specify whether you can accommodate drop-ins or whether appointments are required; what equipment may be used freely and what requires a staff person's assistance; whether clients must bring their own storage media or whether your center provides storage space, and so on. Outline the process for requesting training: do you require a minimum number of attendees? Do you only offer classes at fixed times, or will you do informal trainings? Do you make office calls? And so on.
- *Who are your clientele?* Some centers are restricted to certain departments, some serve an entire campus or institution, and some serve multiple campuses. Some serve faculty but not staff, or faculty and staff but not students, or all three. Be clear about who has access to your services.
- *What is your fee schedule?* If you offer some services for free, and others on a cost-recovery basis, specify this.
- *What is your process for selecting projects?* It may be helpful to articulate, at least internally, the criteria that your organization uses to select projects. For example, some centers may only support projects that involve two or more faculty, or projects that come with grant support.

- When people who don't work for you describe your organization, what do you want them to say? Decide what you want to be known for, and tell that story in your public materials, open houses, showcases, and annual reports.

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## Case Study

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### University of Maryland, Baltimore County New Media Studio Establishes Advisory Board

*The New Media Studio at UMBC established an Advisory Board to offer guidance – and ties to the campus community – as the Studio redefined itself as a self-supporting organization. Here is the story in their own words. (See also [asp1.umbc.edu/newmedia/studio/index.cfm](http://asp1.umbc.edu/newmedia/studio/index.cfm) )*

#### The Situation

Three years ago UMBC's New Media Studio moved to a self-support cost recovery model. Our production services have typically been used by a small group of core clients. These were largely grant-funded centers who contract with the Studio for web programming, design and multimedia components of larger projects.

While the Studio has consistently operated in the black, we felt that we had a visibility problem. Beyond our core client group we were not connecting effectively with the larger campus community. By reaching out to additional areas we hope to enrich the mix for future projects.

#### The Action Taken

This year, at the suggestion of our CIO, we invited ten faculty members and administrators to serve on an internal advisory board. In choosing the membership we were careful to strike a balance of current and potential stakeholders. We hope that this mix will help stimulate new ideas for projects and possible collaborations within the group.

The process of inviting participation on the board was in itself a surprisingly fruitful one. Each potential member was individually invited to lunch to talk about the Studio and their participation on the board. This one-on-one interaction gave us a rare chance to really focus on the individual needs and interests of our constituents in a personal and informal setting. Several of these occasions resulted in identifying potential projects.

In order to make membership on the board more attractive we have intentionally kept the commitment of time very minimal. We meet twice a year. The fall meeting includes a brief report on the Studio's activities in the previous academic year and is more of a portfolio review than a fiscal report. A more extensive formal annual report is also provided to the board. The meeting also includes a discussion of New Media trends and how they relate to UMBC's needs. The NMC's *Horizon Report*, which is also provided to the board, offers a great springboard for this discussion. The spring meeting focuses more on ideas from the board itself. This is designed to be a productive brainstorming opportunity that will inform future directions for the Studio. Lunch is provided at both meetings.

Beyond the formal commitment of the board meetings, we hope that membership will increase the faculty's sense of being stakeholders and advocates for the Studio. Through

ongoing projects and informal discussions, board members are becoming true partners in the Studio's operation.

### **The Effect on Campus**

This is the first year we have convened the board so it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of this effort. One project has developed in part through the process of forming the board. In January 2006 we are hosting a workshop for faculty interested in integrating digital storytelling into their teaching. Board members from several disciplines, including history, intercultural communications and visual arts, actively supported this idea, enabling us to find the resources to bring trainers from the Center for Digital Storytelling to campus.

### **Tips for Other Centers**

- If you decide that an Advisory Board is for you, choose your board carefully. Find a mix that reflects where you are and where you want to be.
- Keep the size manageable. It was hard to limit our number to ten, but more would have reduced the sense of involvement for the members.
- Keep it personal. I think this is the real value of the board in that it presents an opportunity to interact in a positive and collegial way with your constituents.
- Everyone likes a free lunch.

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## **Strategy #6: Make your boss's goals your goals**

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Your boss is a client and an ally. He or she will be defending your organization, justifying its continued existence, securing or approving funding, and marketing your center in higher circles. It is to your advantage to make your boss look good, and if your goals and your boss's goals are the same, your success will be your boss's success.

Finding out what your boss's goals are can be daunting, especially within the hierarchical system of a university. For those who are able to, the most straightforward course is to sit down with your boss and talk about his or her goals. If that is not possible, look for clues wherever they may be; listen carefully in meetings, ask clarifying questions, and keep abreast of decisions made in your boss's arena. When you begin a project, meet with your boss and talk about how you plan to approach it. Lay out the goals as you see them, giving your boss a chance to respond by validating or clarifying what you have said.

The idea is to put yourself in the position of helping your boss look good to his or her superiors by framing your unit's objectives in the context of the larger goals of the institution. The point is not to flatter or ingratiate yourself with your boss, but to align your part of the organization with the greater direction of the college, school, campus, or university as a whole. Doing so will ensure that what you are doing is part of the larger picture.

If your relationship with your boss is not on a footing that makes it possible to have such a frank conversation, or if you are not blessed with a focused boss, the situation becomes a little more difficult. You may need to look further up the hierarchy for guidance: what are your boss's boss's goals? Look to where leadership is coming from, and align your goals with those

goals. Knowing the larger picture, whether or not you know your what boss's goals are, can only help you position your organization to maximum effect.

## How to Get There: Suggestions from Directors

Once you are aware of your boss's goals, the next step is to place your organization in a position to support and advance those goals. For that to happen, you need to understand, respect, and support your boss's objectives. Translate these into goals that your unit can meet, make sure that your focus aligns with these goals, and document your progress and successes.

- *Manage your boss's expectations so that your goals are achievable.* As with any other client, setting expectations early will reduce misunderstandings and disappointment later. Make sure your boss understands what your organization does and what the skills and strengths of your staff are, especially if he or she is new to the position or to the campus. Outline your focus, share past success stories, and talk about projects you plan or hope to be able to do in the future. Listen carefully to pick up any clues about objectives your boss may also have.
- *Make sure that your boss mentions your organization in his or her self-evaluation.* If your center's accomplishments support your boss's goals, those accomplishments will be included in reports by your boss. For this to happen, you need to demonstrate to your boss that your organization is meeting his or her goals. Market yourself not only to potential clients, but to your boss as well. Report milestones and outcomes that illustrate your, and therefore your boss's, success.
- *Give your boss good things to say about you that directly support his or her goals.* When your boss gives a speech, offer to write part of it – the part that talks about your organization. Share testimonials from clients who matter to your boss. Construct your annual report so that your boss can draw from it when he or she makes presentations.

## Case Study

### UT Austin's Center for Instructional Technologies Creates *EUREKA!* to Support Undergraduate Research

*Looking to the explicit goals of the provost, the Center for Instructional Technologies (CIT) at University of Texas, Austin, was able to apply their expertise to address a campus-wide problem. The result was so successful that CIT has been asked to provide a similar solution for the UT system as a whole. Here is the story in their own words.*

*(See also [www.utexas.edu/research/eureka/about/index.php](http://www.utexas.edu/research/eureka/about/index.php))*

#### The Situation

At the University of Texas, Austin, it was perceived that research materials for undergraduate students were underused. Since one of the provost's initiatives is to support undergraduate research, we perceived a need for a resource to help students learn about and find research opportunities.

### **The Action Taken**

This was a collaborative effort with several colleges and the highest levels of administration. CIT worked with stakeholders, conducted a needs survey, and organized an advisory committee. This work informed a proposal for an Undergraduate Research Clearinghouse website that clearly identified the goal of the project, described the development and maintenance needs and timeline, identified the specific promotional activities needed to ensure use and success of the website, and listed the functions and features of the proposed site.

### **The Effect on Campus**

*EUREKA!* features an online directory of faculty research interests for the more than 1800 faculty members and research scientists at UT Austin. Visitors to the site are able to search by keyword and find faculty from a wide range of fields working on a variety of topics. Students use *EUREKA!* to find tips on getting started in research, information on funding and publication, and postings by UT faculty for research positions on campus.

The system has had a very positive effect, especially on changing the culture of undergraduate research. Students now understand what undergraduate research is, have a vision of themselves as researchers, and understand that research occurs in areas outside the natural sciences and includes the humanities. Something we hadn't anticipated is that faculty are getting linked to each other and working collaboratively and across disciplines in research and in areas such as networking grant proposals. The University of Texas system has asked us to create a similar program system-wide.

### **Tips for Other Centers**

It really helped to identify stakeholders from all around campus early on, so as to approach this problem using both grassroots and top-down efforts to generate interest and solicit input. We were fortunate that all stakeholders were keenly interested in the success of this project, and that it aligned with an important initiative of the provost's. Once we received initial input, the team worked with a smaller group of primary stakeholders. Like any website, this system requires frequent updating as faculty come and go, and the key to its success is advisors who match faculty research needs with students of appropriate backgrounds and interests.

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## **Strategy #7: Use your power**

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One sign of an impactful center is that it is involved with activities on campus, especially those that call for problem-solving. When any technical challenge arises at your institution, your center should be one of the first places people turn for advice and assistance. The perspectives, insights, and expertise of your staff should be valued and sought. Whatever the project or event, if it involves technology, people should be afraid to leave your center out, because of what you bring to the table. When there is a problem, use your power to be part of the solution.

Establishing a reputation of being part of the solution builds on other strategies previously discussed. Because your center has formed allies, you have the ability to reach out to other units on campus and bring them in. Because your center is productive in effective ways, the community is aware of what you have to offer and thinks of your organization when something comes up. Because you are known to be adaptable, people have confidence that you can meet any challenge creatively. And because you make your boss look good, he or she naturally wants you to be part of anything big that goes on.

Cultivating the skills of collaboration, cooperation, and creative thinking in your staff will move your center forward. In addition to possessing technical competence, being good team players will secure your people a seat at the table.

## How to Get There: Suggestions from Directors

Be a credible, positive force for solutions and good decisions. Do your homework; a little research, prepared in a way that is easy to read and presented to the major decision makers, will help establish your center as a source of valuable, unbiased information. Make recommendations based on research. To build credibility, spend a little extra time to make your printed materials attractive and usable – not necessarily four-color glossy pieces, but clean and well-formatted.

- *Provide problem-solving, not just implementation.* Look for opportunities to apply the expertise of your staff to meet challenges on campus. When you approach a project, consider the larger picture and see if there is a strategic solution rather than a stop-gap one. Be known for your ability to solve problems, not just your ability to install software or create multimedia presentations.
- *Work with faculty so they become your advocates.* Training, support, and relationship-building will turn clients into loyal supporters. Nurture your relationships with your allies and they will recommend you when things come up. Be available when faculty need you.
- *Volunteer.* Pay attention to what's going on around campus and speak up when there is something your center can help with. Let people know that you think you might add. When you sign up to do something, deliver – and deliver bigger and better than you promised. Be part of the planning as well as the implementation.
- *Build a track record.* Become known for being a team player, and for helping people to create high-quality solutions, and your campus leadership will think of you right at the start. As you market your center, highlight those areas where you were part of designing a larger solution.

## Case Study

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### **California State University Center for Distributed Learning Creates Community of Academic Technology Staff**

*As a department of the CSU Chancellor's Office, the CSU CDL serves not one campus, but 23. Although many IT staff at any given campus have parallel functions with staff at other campuses,*

*they did not often come into contact with each other. The CATS program, created at the CSU CDL, directly addresses this issue by providing a forum for staff across the 23 CSU campuses to share ideas and information about relevant technologies and practices. Here is the story in their own words. (See also [cats.cdl.edu](http://cats.cdl.edu) or contact Abbe Altman [[abbe@cdl.edu](mailto:abbe@cdl.edu)] for more information.)*

### **The Situation**

The Community of Academic Technology Staff (CATS) was created in 1998 in response to a need for CSU campuses to provide cost-effective professional development and training for their academic technology personnel. Also, campuses were losing experienced techs during the dot-com boom. Developing CATS programs was seen as one answer to staff retention.

### **The Action Taken**

We began with a conference and sponsored attendance of 4 staff from each campus to participate in a 3-day conference. The event was put on “*for and by the staff*,” meaning that CSU personnel both developed the conference program and presented the sessions. At the conference, staff had the rare opportunity to network with peers from other campuses to share knowledge and expertise. In subsequent years, additional programs, including a small grants program, listservs, and domain-specific Communities of Practice were launched to continue leveraging the networking that took place at conferences, and CATS became a year-round professional development program. In addition, some campuses have created “local CATS” groups that meet regularly to discuss their particular campus’ issues, network with one another, and share their expertise.

### **The Effect on Campus**

Conference attendees evaluated the conference and declared it a huge success. The staff stayed in touch with the people they’d met from other campuses in order to perpetuate the conference experience. Attendees returned to their campuses with new tools and growing expertise in their fields – not to mention boosted morale – and campus administrators began to see the value of such a program. The conference is now an annual event.

### **Tips for Other Centers**

Identify academic technology leaders on the campus(es) and bring them together for a planning session where they can identify common problems. Based on the information gathered, they can begin to shape a conference. Ask the campuses to support the effort by identifying personnel that can present on the selected topics. Provide lots of opportunity for networking—some CATS members have said that although they learn a great deal from conference sessions, they get more out of connecting with other participants. Get financial backing to sponsor attendees, at least for the first event. Fund and dedicate at least one staff person whose job is to coordinate CATS-like events and programs as well as logistics. Do lots and lots of marketing.

## Closing Thoughts

As this guide was being created, we had the chance to talk to more than 50 NMC directors and centers about the kinds of things they are doing, and how they have navigated the sometimes tricky waters of campus budgets, politics, and uneven leadership to get their work done. Across the NMC membership, it is easy to see example after example of how people at the front lines of teaching and learning are providing models of innovative practice and stimulating innovation in countless ways to help their communities use technology and media to foster creativity, teaching, and research. The impact such centers are making goes far beyond providing basic computer and audio-visual support — impact means getting faculty, curators, administration, and other campus leaders to become invested in, even passionate about using new media tools and techniques to transform their own work and practices.

The kinds of impact highlighted in the case studies highlighted here are illustrative, and showcase what can be done through collaboration, through trust, through clarity of purpose, and through resourceful problem-solving. Centers that do this are going to be crucial to the continued growth and progression of any organization. The successes of campus and museum-based New Media Centers are many, but the challenges that have had to be met and overcome have been many as well. The work we do is hard, but we do it because it is deeply meaningful, with profound potential to change peoples' lives.

For that reason, we hope that you will find the straightforward strategies presented here and the real stories that accompany them to be useful in maximizing your own success. They are lessons hard won, from people who learned them in the trenches of teaching and learning.

For the authors and contributors, the joy of this project has been in discovering and discussing these lessons, which members have encountered over and over on campuses large and small. May they be as helpful to you as they have been to us.

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