

Staff Development, 1975-1984
Notes from Director of Staff Development, Bob Mitchell

I began my career at DMACC in December, 1971, teaching human relations and communications to a wide variety of specializations, including dental hygiene and auto mechanics. Then, I was offered the opportunity to serve as the lead economics instructor in the arts and sciences area under Rus Slicker and did that for 18 months. I then moved back to Career Education Department and served as Short Course Coordinator, reporting to Melody Powell in Carroll Bennett's (Bob Eicher and Harold Gamm) area. Joe Borgen was hired as the VP of Instruction and soon created the job of (full-time) Director of Staff Development, a responsibility he had held on a part-time basis in his previous position. I was offered that position and in 1975 became the Director of Staff Development, reporting to Joe Borgen. I was the first full-time Community College Staff Developer in Iowa and among only a handful in the nation. As such, I was responsible for developing and delivering staff development activities with the goal of providing improvement opportunities for all staff. I also took over the role of coordinating the certification of all instructors with Howard Hammond at the (DPI) Iowa State Department of Public Instruction.

The Great Teachers Workshop

In the spring of 1976, I learned of a weeklong workshop in Illinois called "The Great Teachers Workshop." The July workshop was facilitated by its founder, Roger Garrison, who was the director of Special Programs at Westbrook College in Illinois. Anyone involved in the improvement of teaching skills was invited. I thought it best if I could take along some of our instructors and put out the invitation. John Robinson was one of the five who went with me. I took prodigious "organization and process" notes with the goal of duplicating the workshop in Iowa. Upon return, I contacted Sally Ihne at DPI and asked for a meeting. I explained the experience and told her that I thought we needed to replicate it for our community college instructors.

Sally was intrigued enough to arrange for a joint meeting with Dr. Duane "Andy" Anderson of the University of Iowa's Office of Community College Affairs (OCCA). Andy offered his graduate students to help staff the week long workshop and to get it accredited for one semester hour. He also offered a place to do it: The Lakeside Lab at Lake Okoboji. The first workshop was held in late August of 1977 with Andy and me as co-facilitators. We had about 35 instructors attend. I was adopted by the OCCA staff as an adjunct faculty member and together we put on an annual Great Teacher's Workshop every year until I left in 1984. The workshop went on without me until Andy's death in 1992. Shortly upon return of the successful first GTW, one of our administrators, Carl Rolfe, asked if we could do something similar for them. I asked Andy, and, together with the OCCA staff, we created the Administrative Dimensions Workshop (ADW). Again, Andy and I co-facilitated it. The ADW, as it became known, was based on the same model of the GTW. And, it was every bit as successful. ADW went on, for at least as long as I was at DMACC.

The National Council for Staff, Program and Organizational Development

Concurrently with the development of our own Great Teacher's Workshop, a national organization of staff developers (mostly part-timers then) was being formed. We met in Illinois one weekend in June of 1977. The National Council for Staff, Program and Organizational Development (NCSPOD), an affiliate council of the American Association of Colleges and Junior Colleges, was born. Rolland Terrill of the Community College in Jacksonville, FL, was elected president. I was elected the vice president of

communications, and moved up through the chairs to become the president of that organization in 1980-81.

The creation of NCSPOD led to the creation of the Iowa Council for Staff, Program and Organizational Development, (ICSPOD) and also the regional Midwest version. These are still functioning today. We held many a workshop around the region but the best site was at Springbrook State Park where we had several meetings. NCSPOD is still going strong with over 700 members and is holding its 37th Annual Convention in Chicago, in October 2014. It is now the North American Council for SPOD and is an affiliate council of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC).

SDUs

Almost immediately after becoming the Director of Staff Development, the faculty bargaining unit worked with administration to create a means of being rewarded, financially, for “doing” staff development. As a result, the Staff Development Unit (SDU) was born. It could be earned by taking a class, doing a work experience, or attending a workshop. I coordinated all of the recordkeeping. The program was deemed a “success” from the point of rewarding those who made the effort to engage in some form of self-development activity. I did a study on the SDU program and found that the people who were benefiting from it the most (financially, by earning enough SDUs to change lanes in the salary schedule), by taking advanced classes, would have taken those classes anyway. So, the SDU was not really serving as a motivator.

We had been providing staff development opportunities for several years, and I was always trying to come up with something new. We had a staff development committee for the faculty, one for administration, and one for the secretarial/clerical staff. Each would brainstorm on the activities they wanted for the next year. One such outcome was the “Women’s Internship” program. It was conceived as a means to give women in administration a boost to their career. Female administrators would approach a male and ask if they would serve as their mentor. Upon reaching the informal agreement, a form was submitted to the Internship Committee for approval. This program, although modest, was groundbreaking. We were among the very first to develop and implement such a program. It was soon copied and implemented throughout community colleges.

Staff Development Days for Support Staff

One of the more unique activities we developed was the Semi-Annual Staff Development for the Support staff. The support staff committee created a program that they wanted. It had three elements: a general session that was for everyone, followed by three breakouts. One was for self-development; one was professional development in general and one professional development of a specific skill. The unique part of these programs was that they were held off campus. This program not only demonstrated our commitment to staff development for all staff, but also helped the supervisors appreciate their support staff.

New Teacher Workshop

Created from scratch, DMACC conducted a semi-annual “New Teachers Workshop” designed to assist those who had career experience but had never been in front of a class of adults. The workshop contained a “micro-teach” component with video feedback. Each new instructor was given five minutes to present something that they were interested in to the rest of the “class.” Then we all participated as

each person critiqued their own presentation. It was extremely stressful for some it, but it was an effective method of demonstrating to them what their strengths were and where they had areas for improvement. This was followed with one-on-one development for those who were interested in increasing their presentation skills. When video cameras first became available I realized how effective a tool it would be for our instructors to improve their delivery skills. So, in addition to using video in the New Teacher Workshop, I offered it to existing instructors.

Introduction of Computers

When personal computers became available, Mitch Mitchell, who was the Director of Instructional Design and I began offering tutoring to faculty on how to use them. One of the earliest uses was to create a spreadsheet for calculating and recording student's grades. As in anything new, we had a few early adopters, but most were content to not get involved. The person having the most impact on the use of PCs on the campus was Gary Wilcox, then the Dean of Arts and Sciences. Gary was a former math instructor and had a real attraction to the PC and what it could do. So, he taught himself some advanced uses of the Lotus Spreadsheet. He began to calculate his departmental budget using the PC.

President's Day

At the beginning of the school year, usually on the first day back, we all gathered in the auditorium for the president's welcome back and "state of the college" message. It was also used as a "staff and organizational development day." We then went to several breakout sessions that had been pre-arranged and staffed.

The filming of "Up Close and Personal" with Mark Pogge

We began to focus on helping the staff get to know how diverse we were and develop an appreciation for every employee's contribution to DMACC's success. I approached Mark Pogge in the Media Center to see if he could help me create some videos that I called "Up Close and Personal." Mark was a wizard in our Media Center and enthusiastically took on the task of filming and editing. Even before video cameras could record reliable sound, we created them by using a piece of equipment that would sync sound with film. The results were fun and informative and the first real Organizational Development pieces created for the whole staff meeting.

Time Management

Marion Shultz and I designed a phone call log book. Marion created it on her typewriter, and the copy center did the rest. We had copies printed in different colors with a landscape orientation on half pages and spiral bound into phone-call log pads. They were printed in different colors so Marion could use blue for me and yellow for Joe. She would keep the pad while we were away from our desks, and we would each pick ours up on the way into our offices. What started as a tool in our office spread to offices throughout the college.

Organizational Development

In addition to all of the activities on campus, I organized the first ever Ski Trips to Welch Village. This would have been around 1975. We continued them for many years. We would leave DMACC on Friday afternoon and drive to Welch Village, MN, stay for two nights and ski as much as we could get in before

heading back Sunday afternoon. In addition to them being just plain fun, the activity broadened personal skills and established cross campus friendships that enriched campus communication.

One-on-one counseling for staff

As part of the Staff Development Director's job, I was often engaged in private conversations that amounted to career counseling/and conflict resolution for staff members. I was asked to provide career "outplacement" services for my peers and put together a package that helped individuals develop their resumes and counseled them on how to make the transition to life after DMACC.

Orientation program

How to get a new staff member to learn about DMACC and all of what we did was a staggering task. DMACC was in a full growth mode. People were being hired at a pretty good clip. Because we were constantly adding new staff, it was not practical to do one-on-one orientation. Eventually, after several failed attempts to conduct orientation sessions, I developed a "Self-Guided" Orientation program. Each new staff member was supposed to contact the name on the form and arrange for a "get to know this area of DMACC" session. The form was to be initialed by the person responsible for that area and dated. It was to be completed within the first 90 days of employment. However, nobody had the time to take a new employee by the hand and show them his or her area. So, orientation was left to each department to figure out what their new employee needed to know about DMACC and show them "the ropes."

Film Library

As a means of providing instructors with "State of the Art" information about how to get along in the world of work, we created the DMACC Staff Development and Supervisory Training Film library/directory. As a part of the process I reviewed all of the training films that were available and purchased the best of them. These films became a mainstay in DMACC's Supervision, Management and Leadership classes. We kept the library up-to-date, adding to it every year. The first "Catalog" published in 1977, lists a total of 31 films cross referenced by topical areas.

Word Processing

Jenny Mahlow headed up Word Processing (WP). WP was a huge aid to all staff for creating documents. But, people didn't really know how to use it, so we had sessions in our staff development programs to bring people up to speed on how WP could help them be more productive.

In conclusion, we enthusiastically made DMACC one of the best community colleges in the US. We all grew up together. It is very satisfying to think that I played some small role in making that happen.