The Great Teachers Format: Why Does It Work?

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Introduction

"Twenty-five years ago, I wanted to learn how to teach." From that simple and profound desire, David Gottshall, founder of the Great Teachers Seminars, started a movement resulting in hundreds of faculty, staff, and organizational development seminars with thousands of participants throughout the United States and Canada (1993). Their popularity and use has been noted by a number of writers on community colleges in their discussions of faculty development strategies and innovations (O'Banion, 1994; Reinhard & Layng, 1994; and Knowlton & Ratliffe, 1992). The seminars anticipated recent recognition by universities that learning to teach comes from experience and from other faculty, and that discussions on teaching are among the "most important undertakings campuses can engage in" (Edgerton, 1993, pp. 4-5). Gottshall and others in the great teachers movement created a quest for the art, methods, and mystery of great teaching.

The seminar format has been adapted for other groups over the years. For instance, from 1987-1993, California statewide seminars included an annual statewide leadership seminar for administrators, annual seminars for teachers and administrators of color, educational leadership colloquia involving faculty leaders and deans of instructions, and regional seminars for classified staff. The model has also been a successful organizational development approach, bringing together representatives from all groups on campuses — administrators, faculty, support staff, and student leaders — on a quest for the "great college." A seminar that included president's cabinet members and 22 student leaders at College of DuPage received national recognition as an "Outstanding Program in Student Development Across America" (1992).

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section covers the format, purposes, principles, practices, and reported outcomes of the seminar. The second section describes the seminar as a learning organization or community; discusses its use of adult learning principles, and compares it with principles for effective teaching. The final section summarizes the key elements of its success and describes some limitations.

Gottshall calls the great teachers model a model of utter simplicity, and asks that all who are involved in the seminars respect its simplicity and use the model with common sense, honesty and integrity (1993, p. 15). The author hopes that this paper does not unduly complicate what is a profoundly simple and powerful experience for learning and growth.

The "Great Teachers" Seminar

Great teachers seminars are built upon a simple structure with excellent facilitation and some basic ground rules. The structure requires that seminar participants actively share their expertise and reflect on their approach to their profession. The seminars are based on five premises:

1. People will be positive and productive.
2. People learn best from one another, from sharing their expertise. They have vast, sometimes untapped, knowledge about their profession.
3. Diversity generates creative thinking.
4. The collective wisdom and experience of the group surpass any individual or single approach.
5. Less is more. Simplification is key to learning.

Each seminar has a similar structure, although the agendas may be very different. There are no preprinted schedules or predetermined agenda topics. Simple ground rules, such as no griping, equal time for all participants, no pointless show and tell, and being one's self establish the climate and culture.

Seminars generally run three to five days, are held at retreat-type locations away from the college, and involve from 25-50 people. A carefully crafted sequence of large group sessions, small group discussions, and relaxation provide a balanced rhythm of interaction, listening, presenting, and reflection and play. Beautiful, relaxing surroundings and excellent food meet basic needs. Following the premise of "less is more," the schedule allows plenty of time to explore and reflect on each topic.

The seminar director and staff members contribute to the success of the seminars, and their roles are subtle and facilitative rather than actively directive. They are selected for good listening skills, broad interests, good judgement, ability to support others' growth, belief in the autonomy of others, eclecticism and charisma. Seminar facilitators almost always have been seminar participants. The experiential nature of the seminar demands experiential training for the staff.

After opening remarks, the first activity of the seminar is an introduction exercise that emphasizes the participants' non-professional interests and backgrounds. An often-used strategy asks each participant to interview and introduce someone else, avoiding all references to disciplines, professions and colleges. Emphasis is on who the participants are, not what they teach or do.

The next set of activities usually involves papers prepared by participants prior to the seminar, one on a success or innovation and one on a problem related to the seminar theme. Each participant shares his or her paper in one small group, starting with the success or innovation paper in the first group, and then shares the problem in a different, subsequent small group. The small groups are carefully designed to include as much diversity of discipline and background as possible. Innovations and problems may be presented more than once, with different sets of participants, depending on the time available, number of people, and interest.

During the discussions, the staff facilitators of the small groups are listening for topics of great interest; in staff meetings, they later generate lists of topics that will be offered to the group for further refinement. Participants, in a large group session, then vote on agenda topics for a

third activity, which are small group discussions on specific topics. Through this process, participants select which topics they want to explore in depth, guaranteeing that the agenda meets the needs of the participants.

Additional seminar activities depend on the nature and desires of the groups. The seminar staff identifies activities that would be of value to those attending and which capitalize on participants' expertise. At some seminars, participants present a "trick of the trade," a non-astounding approach, tool, or device that helps them be more effective on their job. Other possibilities include micro-teaching sessions, longer presentations by participants on their innovations or expertise, readings from influential books, identifying the qualities of great teachers or leaders in participants' lives, values and ethics clarification exercises, case studies, and large group sharing on such practical approaches as what to do the first day of class. New activities emerge from the talents and resources of participants.

Seminars close with presentations on the nature of the great teacher, great leader, great college, or whatever the focus of the seminar has been. The final presentations help fulfill the " quest for The Great Teacher, and, as in the case of any quest, the questers learn much about themselves" (Gottshall, 1993).

Seminar Purposes

The seminar purposes have endured over 30 years and hundreds of permutations. They change slightly to adapt to different groups and focuses. They are listed below—descriptions of the ways they are achieved are in italics.

- To practice rational analysis of educational problems and find realistic, creative approaches to their solution.
  Participants have many opportunities to present and explore solutions and strategies through small group success and problem paper presentations, informal discussions, and topical sessions. Steps to problem solving are described prior to the "problem paper" sessions to assist participants in exploring solutions.

- To cause educators to venture beyond the limits of their own specializations in search of transferable ideas and the universals of education.
  Innovation and success papers prepared by participants are presented in groups carefully constructed to have the widest possible variety of disciplines and backgrounds. Creative brainstorming is encouraged to respond to the problems. What participants have in common as educators is stressed, and the differences celebrated.

- To stimulate exchange of information and ideas within the community college movement by building an expanding network of communication.
  The retreat atmosphere of the seminar encourages discussions and connections at a more personal level than most staff or organizational development events. All participants receive copies of the papers prepared by others, which furthers the

networking after the seminar. A culture is created that supports continued sharing of ideas, seeking assistance from each other, and risk-taking.

- To promote an attitude of introspection and self-appraisal and a humane, open climate in which participants can seriously review and contemplate their attitudes, methods, and behavior.
  The ground rules and premises call for positive problem solving and support. Free time and a retreat location provide participants time, space, and "permission" to pause to reflect on their professional values and goals. The quest for the great teacher (or leader or college) invites participants to ask themselves basic questions about their profession and its purpose.

- To celebrate good teaching (or leadership or a college) and renew the commitment to education.
  The final activity is a culmination of the days' exploration of what is involved in great teaching, leadership, or college. The focus of the entire seminar is on the processes and attitudes involved in greatness.

Gottshall describes the seminar as a movement because it is not associated with any organization and serves no commercial or institutional interests. He asks that there be no guidebooks or manuals "to prevent the development of 'true-believership' or fixed procedure . . . of which the education profession would soon tire" (1993, p.8). He has also described the seminars as "tribal events," or gatherings of people with common connections to share stories and celebrate and reaffirm their culture.

Outcomes

A common problem experienced by participants is trying to tell others about the seminar and what happened, because the outcomes go beyond simply gaining new knowledge. Nakaji (1994) described the California Great Teachers Seminar (CGTS) as an earthquake whose "aftershocks spread themselves throughout all of California carrying an exuberant, boundless and almost defiant energy and momentum. The tremors generated not only race along the surface but burrow deep, cutting the educational landscape into meaningful patterns" (p. 1). On more mundane levels, almost all participants report gaining ideas to use in their work, mention the contacts they make outside of their departments and colleges, and report a sense of renewal and revitalization. These outcomes and those described below have been culled from evaluation letters, forms, and conversations from years of California statewide seminars, two great college seminars at College of DuPage in Illinois, and a study of the California Great Teachers Seminar (Nakaji, 1994).

From all types of seminars, participants report increased openness and self-awareness, willingness and ability to solve problems, self-confidence, risk-taking, willingness to be authentic, commitment to students and their learning, and respect for and trust in their

colleagues. They have a broader awareness of a variety of ideas and strategies. Many take on Increased leadership roles and new job responsibilities after the seminar.

In addition, faculty at great teachers seminars report, increased contacts with students, awareness of student needs, contacts with faculty both in and out of their disciplines, and professional reading. They view teaching from new perspectives.

Great college seminars create the following: increased team feeling, awareness of other points of view, and loyalty and morale. Specific products include revised or new mission and goal statements and task forces on projects identified at the seminar.

Seminars focused on cultural diversity and/or concerns of educators of color have some unique outcomes: validation of experience, strong statewide support networks, appreciation for other racial and ethnic groups, empowerment, mentoring relationships, and increased leadership roles, visibility, and involvement at the local college.

A comprehensive follow-up survey of administrators revealed that participants received increased job responsibilities or promotions (45% in a three-year period, 20.8% in a one-year period), were more aware of different management and leadership strategies, had greater confidence in handling personnel situations, and had greater knowledge and use of statewide resources.

The outcomes described above indicate that the seminar purposes are accomplished, and that the seminar enhances performance, energy, and commitment. In addition to participant reported outcomes, another indicator of the success of the seminar format is the proliferation of seminars. Twenty-eight participants were at the first Illinois Great Teachers in 1970. The movement now involves hundreds of seminars each year across the United States and Canada (Gottshall, 1993). The California Great Teachers Seminar has been attended by over 1100 teachers in 20 years, and there are 20-40 regional and local seminars each year in that state alone.

What is it about the seminars that makes them work? What are the factors that lead to their success and have made them a durable form of staff development? There are a number of ideas from human relations and organizational development theories that explain the power of the seminar format.

The Seminar as a Learning Organization

At least three approaches to organizations and learning help explain the success of the model. The first, Senge's systems thinking approach (1990), is a relatively recent approach to organizational development and incorporates some principles of learning communities. Second, Cross's exploration of the adult learning characteristics also sheds some light on the reasons for the seminar's impact (1981). Finally, the seminar model is compared to a third approach, found in the *Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* (1989).

System Thinking and the Learning Organization

Peter Senge (1990) writes:

> "Most of us at one time or another have been part of a great "team," a group of people who functioned together in an extraordinary way—who trusted one another, who complemented each other's strengths and compensated for each others' limitations, who had common goals that were larger than individual goals, and who produced extraordinary results" (p. 4).
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> "When you ask people about what it is like being part of a great team, what is most striking is the meaningfulness of the experience. People talk about being part of something larger than themselves, of being connected, of being generative" (p. 13).

These two quotes from *The Fifth Discipline* parallel those in many of the evaluation letters from great teachers seminar participants. They feel that they have been part of something that created extraordinary results for them as individuals. At the seminar, people's strengths are recognized and validated, and their limitations are viewed as problems to be solved rather than causes for blame. They are reconnected to their art, their profession and to each other.

Senge's "fifth discipline" is systems thinking, integrating the skills, knowledge and processes in the other four disciplines: shared vision, mental models, team learning, and personal mastery. "Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change . . . " (p. 68). " [It is] concerned with a shift . . . from seeing people as helpless reactors to seeing them as active participants in shaping their reality, from reacting to the present to creating the future" (p. 69).

The integration of all five disciplines creates what Senge calls learning organizations, and in many ways, the seminars are, in themselves, learning organizations. As such, they are very different than most faculty development programs. Instead of experts expounding their expertise to the participants, the participants are actively involved in the learning. Instead of isolating faculty in their positions where they may blame others (students and administrators) for the problems of teaching, faculty are integrated into a system of ownership of teaching and are invited to see teaching as an art, rather than a set of techniques.

In many schools and organizations, people are "done to." Employees become used to being "acted upon" rather than being actors. When teachers are acted upon, they assume that is the way the world is, and in turn "act upon" and "do to" their students. Therefore, colleges can become one-way systems, where knowledge and information flow from the top down. When problems are identified (faculty burnout, student underpreparedness), programs are targeted on those problems instead on the system that caused them in the first place.

While the great teachers seminar is a strategy for faculty renewal and better teaching, it also is an example of an alternative system or structure. In the seminar, the participants are not "acted upon;" they are asked to act upon each other and themselves. By expecting the

participants to be the experts, an organization is created where they are empowered. The structure of the seminar is radically different than many faculty development approaches and uses leverage provided by the participants to change the system of faculty learning.

Personal mastery is another of Senge's disciplines, and includes reason, intuition, creativity, and spirituality. Personal mastery involves continually clarifying what is important and learning how to see current reality more clearly. It involves learning to transcend beliefs in one's powerlessness or unworthiness. It means continually broadening awareness by being willing to let go of assumptions and beliefs that may not be true. Personal mastery means genuinely caring for a desired goal or aspiration. It integrates reason and intuition and helps us continually see more of our connectedness to the world; compassion; and commitment to the whole (p.167). Learning organizations support growth toward personal mastery in their people, knowing that then people will better contribute to the organization. The premises, practices, and ground rules of the great teachers model support personal mastery.

Shared vision is another of the five disciplines. Senge describes shared vision as "a force in people's hearts, a force of impressive power . . . . . At its simplest level, a shared vision is the answer to the question, 'What do we want to create?'" Shared vision is most powerful when people are not only enrolled in and complying with the vision, but have freely chosen to be committed to it. Free choice comes through creating an environment for personal mastery, expanded mental models, and team learning. The purposes of the seminars are to improve teaching and learning, and they are achieved through asking participants to create and share their vision of the "great teacher." By keeping that request before the participants for the length of the seminar and repeating the vision in a variety of ways, an environment is created where they may choose to be great.

The concept of mental models is another of the five disciplines, and represents assumptions about the way things are. The discipline of seeing mental models as simply assumptions and not "true facts" enables people to challenge entrenched beliefs and actually change systems rather than tinkering at the sides. Revising mental models involves inquiry into one's own and others' assumptions, practice in advocating ideas, and a willingness to be wrong. These practices can be dangerous in politicized organizations—inquiry and advocacy may lead to defensiveness rather than progress. However, the great teachers model creates an environment where people can safely contemplate their own attitudes and assumptions and develop skills to look at and expand their patterns of thinking.

The last of the disciplines is team learning. Senge discusses physicist David Bohm's work on dialogue, which occurs "when a group becomes open to the flow of a larger intelligence" (p.239). Dialogue is generative and creative, and is contrasted with discussion, which may be a negotiating activity. People become observers of their own thinking through dialogue. Team learning involves suspending assumptions, seeing each other as colleagues, and balancing dialogue and discussion, reflection and inquiry. It usually needs a facilitator who keeps the dialogue moving through careful intervention. Team learning is a skill that takes practice. During great teachers seminars, participants are able to practice team learning through

being part of carefully facilitated dialogues with ground rules that encourage non-defensiveness, creativity and reflection.

The great teachers seminar as a learning organization is best reflected by Senge's introduction in *The Fifth Discipline*. "The tools and ideas presented in this book are for destroying the illusion that the world is created of separate, unrelated forces. When we give up this illusion, we can then build 'learning organizations,' organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (p. 3).

Learning organizations are an extension of what, in education, has been called learning communities. Marchese (1992) promotes the development of learning communities to counteract the demoralizing systems of many colleges and universities resulting from contradictory messages, perverse funding patterns, archaic personnel practices, conflicted expectations and rewards, and little support of innovation. He believes that improvement depends on improving the community at the college, and thereby improving faculty morale and commitment to learning in the process.

Effective communities create a sense of purpose, help overcome the isolation of faculty members from one another and from their students, support new faculty roles, encourage continuity and integration in the curriculum, and build a sense of group identity, cohesion, and "specialness" (NIE, 1984, p. 33). They are established by excellent leaders and teachers. "Building community must, of course, begin at home. If the college itself is not held together by a larger vision, if trustees, administrators, faculty, and students are not inspired by purposes that go beyond credits and credentials, the community college will be unable to build effective networks of collaborations beyond the campus. If the college itself is not a model community, it cannot advocate community to others" (AACJC, 1988, p. 7).

Great teachers seminars are learning communities. They have a shared vision, designed to inspire. They bring people together in a common purpose, and empower participants through asking for and capitalizing on their contributions. Local and regional seminars reinforce the community among co-workers, while state and national seminars create a community beyond geographical boundaries. Cross (1994) notes the power of communities that are based on shared interests and expertise as ways of meeting the need for connection and enriching the profession.

Building community involves cooperation and collaboration. Collaboration means transforming passivity into active inquiry, building upon curiosity; paying attention to and validating the processes of thinking and planning instead of focusing solely on products; enlisting and valuing others in planning and thinking about methods; and actively participating and supporting each other. Cooperation and collaboration provide the context for the "healing and stimulating power of community" (Katz and Henry, 1988, p.6). Participants who report great energy, renewal, and revitalization confirm the power of the community created at the seminar through collaboration, personal mastery, and team learning.

Adult Learning

Cross's theory of andragogy postulates that adults learn differently than young people (1981). It assumes that adult learners are self-directing, have a broad base of experience, and relate their learning to current social roles and solving current problems. On the other hand, pedagogy both assumes and fosters dependent rather than independent learners. The teacher designs what is to be learned with often minimal assessment of learner needs, experience and skills.

Much college teaching is pedagogical in nature, and therefore faculty and staff development programs are often designed as if they were curricula for traditional college students (Geis and Smith, 1989). Pedagogical approaches transmit expert content and may be appropriate for developing new skills and knowledge, particularly if they are based on a thorough exploration of learner needs. However, they ignore the power of adult learning.

The importance of including active or inquiry based learning approaches in faculty and staff development programs has been noted by a number of writers. Fideler (1991) recommends approaches that encourage faculty to engage in self-assessment and systematic inquiry, and gives examples that include group discussion and review of teaching situations. Eison, Janzow, and Bonwell (1990) describe the importance of incorporating active learning strategies that engage participants, acknowledge the collective expertise of the group, explore attitudes and values rather than transmit information, and provide immediate feedback to the participants.

The great teachers model applies the tenets of adult learning principles and builds upon the self-directed nature of adult learners. It fosters self-assessment and personal goal setting and reflects a commitment to both personal development and developing new skills. The model assumes a high level of expertise and knowledge from the participants that can be used to help identify and solve problems.

Geis and Smith (1989) define the role of "adult educator" as guide, resource person, facilitator of learning, and co-evaluator. Staff members of the great teachers seminars play those roles, creating an environment through their facilitation skills where the participants are also guides and resources for each other. Staff members' emphases on actively listening for talent and interests in order to draw out expertise reinforces the abilities of the participants to learn and to problem solve.

Principles for Good Practice

The "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Higher Education" (Chickering, Gamson, & Barsi, 1989) describe the good practice in great teachers seminars. The following list of the principles has substituted the word "participant" for students and faculty to illustrate their applicability to the great teachers model.

1. *Good practice encourages participant-participant contact*.
   The great teachers seminars encourage a great deal of contact through the frequent use of small groups and the "equal time" ground rule.

2. *Good practice encourages cooperation among participants.*
   Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. The seminars promote collaboration and social activities, sharing ideas and responding to others' reactions to improve thinking and understanding.

3. *Good practice encourages active learning*.
   Through talking about what they are learning and doing, relating it to experience and applying it to their own jobs, participants learn.

4. *Good practice gives prompt feedback.*
   The problem solving groups in particular address issues as they arise. 'Hot" topics are addressed promptly through creating an agenda based on the participants' interests at the seminar.

5. *Good practice emphasizes time on task.*
   The rigid minimal structure, including time for reflection and relaxation, enhances full use of the time on task.
6. *Good practice communicates high expectations.*
   The expectation of positive and productive behavior creates positive and productive behavior, and the ground rules further define the expected behavior. The emphasis that everyone has the potential to be great communicates a high expectation for all.

7. *Good practice respects diverse talents and ways of learning*.
   Great teachers seminars build on the diversity of the people to create the outcomes.

The above three frameworks—systems thinking, adult learning, and the seven principles—provide theoretical constructs that help explain why the seminars have been so enduring and why they continue to be successful for large numbers of people. The next section explores the key elements every seminar must have in order to be successful and builds upon the premises of the seminar listed at the beginning of this paper.

Key Elements for Success

The factors described below were those identified by Nakaji in a 1994 study of the California Great Teachers Seminar and through seminar evaluations gathered by the author. They include an open, safe, and supportive environment; excellent facilitation; ample free time; the rigid minimal structure, and the sharing of ideas.

Open, safe and supportive environment

The seminar promotes a climate in which participants can seriously review and contemplate their attitudes, methods, and behavior as professionals. An open and supportive environment is the product of other factors, and relates to the personal mastery and team learning concepts described by Senge (1990). The facilitators respect the participants and model and encourage positive and productive behavior. The ground rules for behavior state expectations for being supportive and open. The lack of outside experts and the expectation that each person will present their innovation and problems papers in small groups validates participants' expertise. The openness is reinforced by the rigid, minimal structure of the seminar, where participants are expected to fill the structure with their ideas, knowledge, and questions.

Excellent facilitation

Expert facilitation is a key element, and was the second most-often mentioned item in open-ended evaluations. The facilitators help create a safe, open environment. Good facilitation is essential for team learning, since it helps people "maintain ownership of the process and the outcomes," (Senge, 1990, p. 246). Facilitators help promote "the artistry of dialogue [that] lies in experiencing the flow of meaning and seeing the one thing that needs to be said now"(p. 247). Palmer (1993) states that leaders who support and encourage conversations about teaching are a requirement for good talk about good teaching. The facilitators help take participants into risky areas of exploring shared practice, challenging ideas, and acknowledging each others' genius, by following ground rules that keep them from defeating themselves.

It is interesting to note that none of the facilitators interviewed by Nakaji (1994) identified facilitation as a key element, while most of the participants did so. Perhaps the facilitators omitted it because a successful seminar depends on "minimal ego involvement on the part of the director and facilitators alike"(Gottshall, 1993, p. 13). The facilitators are powerful because they are subtle. They guide the flow of creativity and exploration rather than direct it. They model great teaching not through being content experts, but through their attention to the learning and discovery process.

Ample free time and the rigid, minimal structure

The structure is a key element to success. There are frequent breaks, "free time" is scheduled each afternoon at a seminar, and in a five-day seminar, there is at least one entire afternoon and evening off. The strict starting and ending times for the meals and group sessions provide the minimum rigid time structure. Decisions about the type and number of presentations and activities follow the premise "less is more."

Eison, et al. (1990) emphasize the importance of allowing sufficient time to complete learning activities, noting that educators usually try to accomplish too much in the time allocated. The importance of time for reflection is also implied in Paradiso's (1994) evaluation of his great teachers short course. He noted that faculty participants were reluctant to immediately discuss how they might incorporate what they had just heard; however, the final

reports written later detailed plans for adapting the presenters' instructional skills, techniques, and styles.

Integrating knowledge, intuition, and reason requires reflection, and reflection skills involve slowing down thinking processes (Senge, 1990). Palmer's (1990, 1993) discussion of teaching as a mystery and art connects teaching and spirituality. The deepening and expression of spirituality requires quiet, reflective times. All of those approaches to learning and teaching recognize the importance of sufficient time and an environment in which to think about what we are learning and experiencing.

Sharing ideas

Another major factor for success includes the elements related to the papers and demonstrations by participants. Most participants report that they incorporate one or more of the ideas they learned into their job. Many writers discuss the power of learners' sharing of techniques, styles, and approaches, whether it be through Hutchins (1993) case studies, Weimer's (1993) review of pedagogies in the journals, or Senge's (1990) approach to looking at our assumptions about the world. The great teachers seminars provide a variety of ways for participants to express what they know and do. The success results from that variety and the diversity of disciplines and backgrounds, reinforcing the ability of the participants to get good ideas from anywhere and increasing their flexibility to respond to their environment.

Limitations

In spite of its success, the model may not universally applicable. Since it depends on the expertise of the participants, it may not be effective when the participants have had no experience with certain roles or topics. The needs and desires of potential participants for any development activity must be carefully assessed to ensure that the format will meet the staff and organizational development goals. If people want specialized new content (such as some technology applications), formats other than the great teachers model might be used.

Ideally, seminars have about 25-40 participants, although California great teachers seminars have had as many as 70. Mike McHargue, director of over 200 seminars, reports an upper limit of around 90 people, and some of the enduring quality of the outcomes was lost with a group that large. It may be difficult to ensure well-facilitated interaction between the participants and to gather the expertise of so many people in a meaningful way.

One seminar in the author's experience was less successful, perhaps because it occurred just after an unrelated event that caused anger, confusion, and distrust in some participants. She is also aware of local seminars that were canceled due to conflicts at their colleges. The seminars build trust; however, they depend on the good will of the participants to be open to the process and follow the ground rules. Therefore, they may not be appropriate when tensions are high, but could be very beneficial when people have reached the point of wanting to resolve issues and rebuild trust.

In Closing

As stated in the introduction, there have been many adaptations of the format and model, and additional directions are only limited by the imagination of those who coordinate them. Seminars have been developed for teachers in all segments of education, counselors, vocational faculty, staff developers, student leaders, administrators, trustees, and retreats that involve representatives from all groups. It would be interesting to involve community members in search of the great collaborative partnerships or to enlist their help in search of the great college.

While the strength of the great teachers seminar is in the interplay of all of the elements, specific activities from the seminars, such as preparing and presenting successes and innovations, have been used for other staff development activities with great success. Many participants have returned to their colleges and adapted one or more of the activities for use with their students and in committee or department meetings. The possibilities are endless.

"We often read about people having a 'life-changing' experience. The Great Teachers Seminar was such an experience for me. I have been touched by this experience and I will never be the same." So wrote a participant in the 1994 California Great Teachers Seminar. Life changes occur when people are part of something that expands their capacity and their imagination, and where they experience the mystery and excitement of their art—their calling. The great teachers seminar, as a learning organization and community, nurtures the quest for the great teacher, the great leader, and the great college.

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