



**A publication of the National
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Fall 1995

Bill Searle, editor

***in Search
of Great
Retreats***

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READ THIS FIRST

Welcome to this first in a series of professional development monographs from the National Council for Staff, Program and Organizational Development. I hope you will enjoy reading this as much as I enjoyed working with the authors creating it.

Purpose of this publication

Most people involved in Great _____ Retreats agree that the best way to learn how to run a Great Retreat is to attend some. The essence of the "Great" idea is active learning -- involving people in the control and direction of their own workshop. We learn how to "do" active learning by participating ourselves. With this belief, it would be ironic to produce a "How-To" manual. This isn't.

Cindy Hoss and Helen Burnstad, the two NCSPOD leaders who had the idea for this monograph and got it started, aptly explained our purpose in presenting this material.

1. To be 'honest' to the formats as we understand and have experienced them,
2. To excite you about the possibilities and opportunities for you and your institution,
3. To explore some of the different adaptations undertaken,
4. To provide you with material and ideas to help you undertake or improve this valuable and important effort for your school.

A significant aspect of the Great _____ Retreat movement is that, while all share common core processes, there is a remarkable diversity of activities, purposes, issues, and populations served. To present both the diversity and similarity, we asked over 50 colleagues throughout the United States and Canada if they wanted to contribute to this document. Let us know how well we succeeded, and what changes we can make to improve this series for you, by filling out the feedback form at the end of the monograph.

History of the Movement

David Gottshall and the late Roger Garrison are the co-founders of the Great/Master _____ Retreat movement. Roger called his seminars "Master Teacher" seminars, but the essential ideas were (are) the same. All of us who believe deeply in the value of these workshops owe a great deal to these two pioneers. The best information on the history of the movement is in David's publication, done on the eve of the 25th anniversary of the movement. See The History & Nature of the National Great Teachers Movement, David B. Gottshall, College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, Illinois, June 1993.

Terms

The NCSPOD Board chose the phrase "Great _____ Retreats" as the descriptor for the type of workshops this monograph covers. However, individual authors use the terms "Great _____ Seminars," or "Great _____ Workshops," or even "Master _____ Seminars." They are all discussing professional development activities that follow similar formats. Retreats are not different from Seminars or Workshops.

Quality

Editing this monograph has placed me in close touch with some extraordinary people. Helen Burnstad, Bob Cole, Gale Frazer, Larry Fujinaka, David Gotshall, Cindy Hoss, Patrick Parks, Sharon Ratliffe, and Julie Vaughn are highly talented professionals.

If you have a chance to entice any of them to your campus, do so (heck, grab them all!). After 15 Great Teacher, Board, and Staff Seminars, I thought I knew a lot about running such events. After working with these folks, I am more humble and much wiser. I hope you will be also (well, maybe not more humble, but at least wiser!).

Bill Searle
September 1995

USING THIS MONOGRAPH

In any publication aimed at a varied audience, there is always a question about where to start reading. Since this is not a manual on how to conduct Great _____ Retreats, each article does stand alone. You can profitably begin at the end and read forward. However, if you seek a bit more direction, consider the advice that follows.

For people new to the "Great _____ Retreat" movement:

Start with "The What and Why of Great Retreats," and then read the pieces by Helen Burnstad, Larry Fujinaka, and Bill Searle for an overview of the process all Great _____ Retreats follow.

For people interested in Great Staff Retreats:

Start with the articles by Robert Cole, Patrick Parks, Sharon Ratliffe, and Julie Vaughn. They provide a variety of approaches to involving different staff members in Great _____ Retreats.

For people with experience doing Great _____ Retreats:

I think you will have fun reading this monograph. Start anywhere. Reading these pieces by extraordinarily dedicated and talented people will give you a full grab bag of ideas. Here are words of advice; get yourself a pen and paper before you start reading, because there will be plenty of ideas you will want to try in your own retreats.

For a typical participant's reaction:

Look over Libby Young's essay at the end of Larry Fujinaka's article. Libby explains what happens from a participant perspective.

The What and Why of Great Retreats

David Gottshall, founder of the Illinois Great Teachers Seminar and the National Great Teachers movement and facilitator extraordinaire, has written the best piece on "What and Why." David graciously allowed us to reproduce his statement.

"The specific purposes of the Great Teachers Seminars stated in the many annual announcement fliers have remained basically unchanged since the original Illinois Great Teachers Seminar in 1969.

1. To celebrate good teaching.
2. To cause educators to venture beyond the limits of their own specializations and environments in search of transferable ideas and the universals of teaching.
3. To promote an attitude of introspection and self-appraisal by providing a relaxed setting and straight-forward process whereby participants can seriously review and contemplate their attitude, methods and behavior as teachers.
4. To practice rational analysis of instructional problems and to develop realistic, creative approaches to their solution.
5. To stimulate the exchange of information and ideas by building an expanding network of communication among teachers in higher education.

The Great Teachers Seminars are based on four premises.

1. In the long run, teachers learn to teach best from one another. Properly facilitated shop talk can be the highest form of staff development.
2. Creativity in teaching is enhanced by mixing teachers of diverse fields, experience levels and interests.
3. If properly tapped, the collective wisdom, experience and creativity of any group of practicing educators far surpasses that of any individual expert of any stature or fame.
4. The key to success in teaching is simplification (less is more).

The focus of the seminar is not on the teaching of specific fields, but rather on the art of teaching as such. The emphasis is on the nature of a great teacher. It is a quest for The Great Teacher, and, as in the case of any quest, the questers learn much about themselves."

Reproduced from The History & Nature of the National Great Teachers Movement, David B. Gottshall, College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, Illinois, June 1993, p. 7.

OVERVIEW OF THE

JOHNSON COUNTY MASTER TEACHERS WORKSHOP

Helen Burnstad
Johnson County Community College

Beginnings

Interest in creating a Johnson County Master Teachers Workshop was generated by JCCC faculty participating in three major workshops -- Lake Occaboji in Iowa, the Greenfield (Massachusetts) Master Teacher Seminar, and Texas. These instructors shared their experiences during in-service opportunities and the interest grew. By 1991 plans were underway for our Master Teachers Workshop.

All past Master Teacher and Great Teacher participants received information. From this group, the first Master Teachers Workshop staff was selected. The staff met frequently, making major decisions about the site, the facilitators, and the format. Coming from different experiences, the staff combined the style and method of the Lake Occaboji retreat and the Greenfield workshop.

From Greenfield came the objectives

- a. "to celebrate good teaching"
- b. "to promote an attitude of introspection and self-appraisal by providing a relaxed setting and straightforward process whereby participants can seriously review and contemplate their attitude, methods and behavior as teachers."

From the OCCAboji workshop came the rules of the road and the ideas that

- a. "teachers learn best from one another"
- b. "drawing from the collective strength of a diverse group of instructors is more rewarding than hiring a well-known expert."

Staffing

The first staff decided to have an expert facilitate the first two workshops. This person would also train two of our faculty members who would then co-facilitate the third year. After that, facilitators would be selected from past Master Teacher participants and staff. Each year the lead facilitator will train the second facilitator who will, in turn, be the lead facilitator the following year.

The 1995 Workshop was the first facilitated entirely by our instructors. To determine staff and facilitators, a call goes out to all past JCCC Master Teachers Workshop participants asking what role they want to play in planning a JCCC workshop. These responses are tallied by the past staff, who choose the new staff. Those interested but not chosen go on the list for the following year.

The staff includes the co-facilitators, a resource center coordinator, an activities director, a registration and theme team, and a general store or refreshments coordinator.

Selecting a retreat site

One of the most important facets of the workshop is that it is held off campus. The retreat is far enough away that participants cannot go home or to work unless an emergency occurs, yet is close enough that time is not wasted in travel. Our retreat site has been Saint Mary College, which boasts old, beautifully kept, stone buildings in a wooded setting.

Selecting a date

The secluded campus is especially inviting in January when our workshop is held. Because JCCC'S in-service days total ten contract days for faculty, we have a perfect opportunity for the three-day retreat and still allow faculty time for class preparation. Three days is enough time to cover the schedule and have fun and relax.

Participants

Participants are chosen randomly, but they must have the approval of their division administrator and have their individual development plan on file in the Staff Development office. People interested in attending submit a form. All eligible names go in a hat and are drawn until the total number is reached. The number going is determined by the amount of room at Saint Mary College. Those chosen receive a congratulatory letter outlining what they will need for the trip, time of departure, and emergency numbers.

Participants submit three items:

- a. an annotation of a book or article that has had a profound impact on their teaching,
- b. a paper describing a successful teaching strategy,
- c. a very short description of a teaching concern.

These three papers are due well before departure so that they may be reproduced and put in notebooks. Participants are also asked to bring the book and/or copies of the article they annotated to share with other participants.

These resources, along with materials from the Center for Teaching and Learning, make up the resource center at the Workshop. The coordinator of the resource center collects the annotations and alphabetizes them for the notebook. Additionally, the coordinator displays the resources in an inviting area of the Workshop's general meeting room.

Participant notebooks

When the participants arrive, they are greeted by the registration team, given name tags, have their pictures taken, make a mail box, and receive their notebooks. The notebook includes:

- a. the objectives of the workshop,
- b. the ground rules,
- c. everyone's teaching successes and concerns,
- d. some favorite cartoons,
- e. copies of professional articles,
- f. the resource center's annotated bibliography,
- g. the Center for Teaching and Learning bibliography,
- h. some blank pages for taking notes,
- i. thought-provoking quotations provided by the staff.

"Making Connections" - the web

While the participants are settling into their rooms, the mailboxes with their pictures are hung on a prominent wall and connected with black yarn to create a spider web effect. The theme for the Workshop is "Making Connections," and the web symbol is carried throughout the Workshop: in the notebook, on the tee-shirt, around the general meeting room in the decor. At the end of the Workshop the participants create a web by throwing a ball of yarn. Each person, in turn, tells what he/she is taking from the Workshop.

The workshop

At the very beginning participants are given the ground rules:

- a. this is not a time to gripe,
- b. constructive feedback is allowed,
- c. this is a time to share,
- d. everyone gets equal time.

The objectives of the Workshop are discussed. These include

- a. To share teaching and learning strategies,
- b. To encourage reflection about professional knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors,
- c. To stimulate new ideas,
- d. To promote collegiality,
- e. To celebrate good teaching.

The schedule for each day is written on a board in the general meeting room. It is not in the notebook. In the first small group sessions, participants present their successful teaching strategies. Staff members sit in on these discussions to take notes and glean issues that arise. Participants change groups once, so they give their strategy twice.

Before the evening session, the staff meets to discuss issues garnered from the papers sent in and from the afternoon sessions. The list is displayed on poster boards, and the whole group votes on

which are most important.

Small group sessions starting the following day center on these concerns and ways to address them. Participants attend three sessions. In the large group meeting delegates from the small groups share their discussions. Also, during the large group sessions, a variety of ice-breaker activities help to relax the participants and provide fun for them.

On the last day, participants meet with their original small group. First they decide the characteristics of a master teacher. Then they define and describe those characteristics in a creative way to show the full group. These presentations are given as the final activity.

Food

Also important to the success of a Master Teacher workshop is food. Saint Mary College provides three square meals a day, but participants have snacking food available throughout the three days. The general store manager keeps the group happy with a variety of drinks, a choice of healthy fruits and vegetables, and inviting chips and dips. Lately, we have sent a questionnaire out prior to the workshop asking participants what types of snacks they prefer.

Follow-up after the workshop

When the participants return to the campus and the on-going in-service activities, they have a breakfast with former Workshop participants. They all wear their tee-shirts and talk about their experiences. This is an opportunity to connect with fellow master teachers across campus. Other reunions are planned, and tee-shirt days help reconnect participants and develop interest in future workshops.

Marketing the Johnson County Workshop

Marketing the JCCC Master Teacher Workshop is accomplished not only through the praise of past participants, but also through the Center for Teaching and Learning. Information about the Workshop is in the Center's newsletter, and presented during fall in-service activities. Interested faculty can attend a session that informs them about the our workshop and other distant Master Teacher Workshops available to them.

In the three years that we have offered our own workshop, close to 100 faculty have participated. Each of those instructors attests to the value and success of the retreat. They are, by far, the our best advertisement.

GREAT CONVERSATIONS IN WESTERN NEW YORK

Robert Cole and Gale Frazer
Erie Community College

The Western New York experience with the Great Teachers Seminar format began at the 1990 NCSPOD National Conference at Costa Mesa, California. The Erie Community College delegation attended a presentation, entitled "Partners in Management Seminars," offered by Bea Clark of Niagara College in Welland, Ontario and Steve Evans of Mohawk College in Hamilton, Ontario.

These seminars follow the format of the Great Teachers Seminars, having no advance agenda and with full participation and sharing among the participants. Our college's Employee Development Committee invited Bea and Steve to conduct a seminar in April 1991. Our need, especially with a three-campus operation, was to promote conversations between employees at all three campuses.

Fifty-four Erie Community College administrative assistants, office managers, and secretaries attended the two-day-long seminar held at a hotel in a suburb of Buffalo, New York. The goals of our "Great Conversations" seminar were:

1. celebrating good office management
2. stimulating critical thinking and creative problem solving
3. exploring and sharing new ideas
4. increasing communication
5. team building and identifying partnerships
6. renewing self, professionally and personally

We hoped that the Great Conversations Seminar would help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our institution. We planned to identify our needs and develop action plans for institutional and individual renewal.

Ensuring Success

To ensure success we needed experienced lead facilitators to organize the seminar and properly train the small group facilitators. Therefore we chose Bea and Steve who had considerable

experience using the Great Teachers format with varied employee groups in Ontario.

It was important that small group facilitators were persons who would encourage others to share and not ones who would monopolize the groups with their own ideas. An atmosphere of trust had to be created. Therefore, faculty who related well to the clerical staff, who were respected, and did not directly supervise the staff members attending were chosen as small group facilitators.

Another way that trust was achieved was that the primary organizer for the event was a staff person, the secretary to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. A final way of creating trust was that job titles of the participants were equivalent; none of the participants had supervisor-employee relationships.

Facilitators had to be effective in ensuring that the participants would be positive, open, and supportive of the contributions of all members of the group. This led to candor and the free discussion of problems related to their job and to the institution as a whole.

Getting Participation

We mailed invitations to all clerical staff explaining the seminar and telling them what they must prepare for the seminar. It was easy to recruit the 54 office workers who attended the seminar, because an opportunity to break the daily routine and dine and network with colleagues was very welcome.

Participants were instructed to prepare 10 copies each of two, one-page papers. There was some difficulty with some participants fully understanding the nature of the required papers.

However, clarification of the assignment was done by the facilitators during the first sessions and some participants changed their papers before they made their presentation. It is essential, especially for non-academics, that the seminar instructions be very explicit.

We recommend that group leader's phone numbers be on the instructions for anyone has questions about how to prepare for the seminar. In the first paper, participants described an innovation or success related to their job. The second paper described an unsolved, job-related problem.

Running the Seminar

The papers were presented in small groups on the first day. During the small groups of the first day, several problems to be solved through small group brainstorming were identified. Brainstorming was done during the morning of the second day. Closure was achieved when the solutions to the problems were presented to the whole group in the final afternoon of the seminar.

Problems Running Seminars for Office/Administrative Staff

We identified two problems in running such a retreat for office staff. First, some supervisors can't allow their secretaries to attend, because they find it difficult to function without clerical support for two days. Scheduling the seminar when office workloads are low reduces this problem. We chose the Spring vacation. Second, holding the seminar at an off-campus facility attracts staff, but the expense of a hotel or banquet facility can be prohibitive. Since the "Great Conversations," we have conducted Great Teachers type seminars on campus at a much lower cost.

Results

Because of the friendly and hospitable environment, those who attended freely shared their problems and concerns and posed some very innovative solutions to the problems. The evaluations of the seminar were overwhelmingly positive. At least 95% of the evaluations indicated that the seminar met goals 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

The weakest area of the seminar was goal 2 (stimulation of critical thinking and problem solving) with 88% of the 42 respondents agreeing the goal had been achieved. Feedback from the seminar showed that participants felt that it was valuable that they had the chance to meet other employees of the college. Rarely are there opportunities for clerical staff of one campus to get together with those on another campus. The seminar made participants aware of the problems and challenges that other employees face. Several participants reported that the experience enhanced their confidence and enthusiasm.

Administrator's and Counselor's Retreats

Another application of the Great Teachers format was to an administrator's retreat in January 1993. A facilitator who had assisted for the Great Conversations became the director of the one day seminar (Erie Community College now has a group of experienced seminar leaders). The results of the small group brainstorming on significant issues were shared with upper level administration and various committees in strategic planning and accreditation preparation.

In June of 1994, Erie Community College and Niagara College of Ontario collaborated to offer a retreat for college counselors conducted according to the Great Teachers format. Ed Wilson of Niagara College was the seminar director and several Erie Community College faculty assisted as small group facilitators of the retreat attended by twenty counselors.

The format for the counselor seminar was the same as that used for the clerical staff seminar. Ed used the "True Colors" personality assessment instrument as an icebreaker for the counselors and built on each person's color coded personality type throughout the two days. As with the clerical staff it was difficult to schedule the event at a time that counselors could attend without compromising the effectiveness of their offices.

Several issues were identified in the three different seminars that were common to administrators, clerical staff and counselors:

1. enhancing communication within the institution,
2. empowerment,
3. improving service to students,
4. increased opportunities for professional development.

Each group had its own specific challenges. Clerical staff were concerned about improving individual communication skills, team building, and balancing career and family responsibilities. Counselors had special concerns about conflict resolution and motivating faculty and students to use counseling services. A special concern for the administrators was improving departmental leadership.

Summary

The Great Teachers format has been used by Erie Community College in a variety of ways:

1. for personal development,
2. as a technique for institutional problem solving,
3. as a way to increase communication among the various segments of the college community.

Great Teachers Seminars are in their infancy in Western New York, but with the assistance and cooperation from experienced seminar leaders from elsewhere significant strides are being made toward their institutionalization.

THE HAWAII NATIONAL GREAT TEACHERS SEMINAR

Larry Fujinaka
Leeward Community College

Introduction

Take teachers from Hawaii, North America, the Pacific Basin and Europe. Invite them to spend six days on the rim of an active volcano sharing their ideas and experience, and what do you have? The Hawaii National Great Teachers Seminar! This unique multi-cultural and multi-national retreat brings faculty together to learn from each other and to exchange innovative solutions to teaching problems.

Why do it? Indeed, because we are in the most remote inhabited part of the civilized world and because there are eight campuses serving over 20,000 students on all major islands, staff development an essential priority. The University of Hawaii Community College System needs high quality and cost-effective faculty development opportunities that connect us with the rest of the globe. While most of the participants come from two year colleges, the Hawaii Seminar gladly welcomes faculty from the university and high school level.

Historical sketch

The initial groundwork for our seminar included several years of generating interest on the campus and system level by Leeward Community College faculty. In February 1988, a formal invitation was extended to David Gottshall, founder of the Seminar, to conduct a feasibility study.

The consultant met with Chancellor Joyce Tsunoda, the System Staff Development Coordinator, all senior community college administrators, and made a presentation at the 1988 University of Hawaii Community College System Excellence in Education Conference. Presentations and discussions gained support from the campus division chairs and the faculty senate, the Hawaii Council of Community College Faculty Senate Chairs, the Employment Training Office, the various campus Deans and Provosts, and the Chancellor. Promotional presentations were also made at many mainland conferences.

All the planning and preparation finally paid off. The first annual Hawaii Seminar was held in July 1989.

Seminar overview

There is a saying that philosophy dictates practice. The Hawaii philosophy is in harmony with the spirit and intent of all great teaching seminars. Central themes are:

1. much excellent teaching takes place in American higher education;
2. teachers who are striving toward mastery of their craft have much to share with each other; and
3. by bringing teachers together in a relaxed, informal atmosphere to share their experiences and their problems, the skills of all can be enhanced.

The size and format of the Great Teachers Seminar make it appealing for those who are seeking an interactive learning climate. Because of our unique location on the rim of Kilauea crater, we try to allow people extra time for contemplation and reflection about why they entered teaching.

The Hawaii seminar is process-oriented and the six-day format allows a wonderful opportunity to build an active learning community. The atmosphere is always relatively informal but with some minimum structure.

1. Each participant prepares two brief papers focusing on
 - a) an innovation in classroom teaching, and
 - b) a specific instructional problem.
2. The first two days are centered on sharing these materials in small groups, with many opportunities for feedback and reflection on how the experience transfers to life back in the classroom. In a typical seminar, a participant may gain over 60 specific strategies for problem-solving and for teaching during the first two days.
3. Staff members consciously listen and identify "hot topics" which crop up during days one and two. By the second day, the staff draws up a tentative menu for future workshops. This list is discussed by the full group and topics are added and deleted until specific workshops are identified. Workshop sessions for days three and four workshop sessions are, therefore, tailored to issues unique to each group.
4. Participants have time to share their research and instructional expertise. The one week format allows and encourages participants to bring innovative teaching paraphernalia and research data to share during community meetings.

5. A library displays college catalogues and other educational materials for use and sharing during the week. Again, the week format gives people much more time for browsing, reviewing, and discussing materials with others.
6. Field trips build camaraderie and demonstrate practical applications of teaching skills. Time is set aside during the third and fourth days for group tours of the volcano crater, lava fields, Hilo town, and Kona areas. These trips focus on the interrelationship of teaching with the economic, political, sociological, psychological, and historical elements of the community: thus, the transfer of teaching to the community.
7. The Seminar culminates with an Aloha dinner -- a genuinely warm evening of celebration with music, food, door prizes and laughter. Breaking bread together on the last night with invited administrators, union officials and Kilauea Military Camp personnel adds a special touch. The food and entertainment give us opportunities to discuss Hawaiian customs, attitudes, and beliefs.
8. We give people time to walk along the rim of the crater, journey down onto the floor, or just sit and look across miles of hardened lava. Most report that this helps them reflect upon why they choose their profession.

Keeping the Hawaii Seminar Going

Around 1985, four goals were identified to initiate the Hawaii Seminar. If the Seminar is to survive and grow, these goals remain the same today.

Goal 1: Gain faculty and administrative support.

Our initial planning sessions not only generated further interest and identified problems unique to the Hawaii colleges but also called attention to the need for fixed, annual funds for faculty attendance because each seminar is self-supporting.

As with all faculty development efforts, the Hawaii Seminar staff constantly searches for ways to control costs, raise extra dollars, and make better use of existing funds.

Goal 2: Obtain a suitable site.

A successful seminar needs a somewhat isolated setting. The truth is that one needs a place where there are few distractions. An inexpensive site that fosters a casual, interactive climate is best. Because multi-cultural events are an important part of the Hawaii Seminar, ample parking and proximity to areas of educational interest are prerequisites. We also felt that we could find a location that provided space for the quiet reflection necessary for rejuvenation.

The Kilauea Military Recreation Camp (KMC) on the grounds of the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park fit our requirements. Located 32 miles outside the town of Hilo on the Big Island of Hawaii, KMC is ideal for the Hawaii Seminar. Participants have enjoyed the facilities of an established conference center located 250 yards from the rim of the Kilauea caldera. The weather during the summer often brings lows of 50 degrees at night and highs in the 70s.

The atmosphere at this mountain recreation center is relaxed. The Volcano Golf Course is adjacent to KMC and recreational opportunities such as bicycling, hiking, bowling, a physical fitness center, volleyball and tennis courts are within walking distance at the Camp. KMC has a chapel, dispensary, gift shop, service station, post office and general store for groceries, sundries, clothing and reading material. Many cabins have a fireplace, cable TV and a small refrigerator.

Goal 3: Develop a competent and well-organized staff.

David Gottshall says the foundation of a Great Teachers Seminar rests with the staffing. The selection and training of facilitators has always been a top priority. Our seminar is a dynamic learning process and a well-organized staff is the key to continuing success. Staff development has taken many forms, such as exchanges and participation with the California, Canada, Connecticut, and National Seminars.

Unlike other seminar staff, the Hawaii staff often employs more and uniquely different skills. Throughout the academic year, the business manager and director work closely with the campus staff development coordinator on the budget. Other staff members solicit Hawaiian door prizes during the year. During the Seminar, staff members daily prepare a variety of ethnic snacks that highlight the end of each evening's formal activities. Several staff regularly hold informal discussions about Hawaiian beliefs with interested participants. Finally, a staff member from the main campus registers and monitors participants who are interested in earning college credit during the Seminar.

Goal 4: Develop an effective marketing strategy.

Our marketing focus is that the Hawaii Seminar is a national seminar, with a Pacific Rim focus. We consciously recruit participants who are ethnically and geographically diverse. The marketing also reflects the genuine commitment of the University of Hawaii Community College System to promote a high quality Seminar experience with long-term positive outcomes.

Summary

We believe the Hawaii Seminar is on target as it nears the tail end of its first decade. Success is measured in many ways but perhaps, best by the veteran consumer. Hundreds of voices regularly report the transfer of learning from the seminar to their on-campus lives. Libby Young, a former participant and staff member from Windward Community College, documented her views in the following narrative:

IN SEARCH OF THE GREAT TEACHER

Libby Young

On the last day of the Hawaii Great Teachers Seminar on the Big Island, some fifty of us sat in a circle, sharing what we would take back to our classrooms. "Renewed commitment," said one community college teacher from California. "Pride in our profession and some good ideas," said another from Oahu.

Then one nursing instructor from Texas added, "The memory of being a child again." Many of us nodded, understanding exactly what she meant. For the past six days, we had traded our teacher clothes for sneakers and jeans. We had laughed, admitted our mistakes, looked at our students with new eyes and tried to understand what makes a "great teacher."

It's easy to wax sentimentally about the Hawaii Seminar -- and about our profession -- in the afterglow of this teacher's summer camp. We were, after all, in a place of great escape: the Kilauea Military Recreation Camp in the volcano area of the Big Island. The altitude and crisp air helped to clear our minds of academic muddle. For a week, we left behind book orders and administrative minutiae to focus on the heart of what we really do. Even the volcano itself helped to remind us of everything that was simple and elemental in our lives.

Each summer Great Teachers Seminars are held in different states and Canada, in beautiful and relaxing locales. The idea is to bring people together, away from campus distractions, to learn from each other. The result has been a growing movement, with more states sponsoring their own versions and California adding a similar seminar for administrators.

For the 1991 Hawaii version, more than fifty of us gathered from across the country -- about half from the University of Hawaii community colleges and UH-Manoa campus and the rest

from places such as Connecticut, New York and Arkansas. Coordinators Larry Fujinaka and Dennis Kaibara of Leeward Community College and Harold Kozuma of the University of Hawaii at Hilo made sure everyone felt at home. It was my second "great teachers" experience. Last year I was a participant, but this year I was invited back as a facilitator.

Our leader, David Gottshall, reminded us this was not just any professional conference. There would be no formal presentation of papers or keynote speakers. We were the experts in teaching, and we were there to share what we knew.

And that is exactly what we did. For six days -- inside and outside, over coffee, on bus excursions, early in the morning and late into the night, by a fire or under a tree -- we shared ideas the way friends trade secrets.

How do you motivate students? What about more humor in the classroom? Encouraging critical thinking? Handling diversity? We talked about teaching innovations and problems; shared one minute ideas from our "bag of tricks" and books that had influenced our lives; learned where we stood on issues in education; and discovered an amazing network of teachers who remain truly committed to their profession.

One of the keys to the success of these seminars seems to be the honesty: how honest are we willing to be with a group of strangers about our own successes and frustrations? Maybe we're more willing to reveal ourselves in settings like this -- away from campus politics, daily classroom pressures, and some colleagues who are less than collegial.

The Great Teachers movement also practices a "less is more" approach to both seminar planning and teaching. Instead of a heavily preplanned agenda, "hot topics" which emerge in the early small-group sessions form the list of possible workshops later in the week. Topics on this list included "Teaching Smart," "Teaching through Imagination," "Academic Freedom," "Making It Real," and "Encouraging Student Responsibility."

Sharing sessions like these can work their own quiet revolution. Hearing what other people do in class can spark more ideas, clarify thinking and trigger possibilities to try in your own courses.

The sessions reminded me of those late-night dorm marathons when we talked about Life with a capital L, only this time the subject is Teaching. At Great Teachers, the talk ranged from the nitty-gritty of facilities to cosmic questions such as open admissions. Community college teachers from across the country all seemed to be grappling with the same questions: How much can our colleges realistically do? How can we reach students more effectively?

At the beginning of the seminar, the leader also outlined the Six Commandments meant to guide our behavior for the week. Several people have observed that these might not be bad rules for on-campus use, either. They include:

1. Thou shalt give equal time.
2. Thou shalt not gripe.
3. Thou shalt not compare systems.
4. Thou shalt not idly show and tell.
5. Thou shalt not hold back.
6. Thou shalt mutually enforce the other five.

As a staff facilitator, I was impressed with how well the groups tried to follow these rules. They also made me wonder why we can't do more of this on our home campuses. The discussions focused on solutions whenever possible, not just a recounting of problems. There was a conspicuous lack of ego as veteran teachers asked for ideas on student motivation and retention. People seemed anxious to help each other solve their problems and simply become better teachers.

We also discovered how our similarities seemed to outweigh our differences. The nursing instructor and the food service teacher knew how to make learning "real" for students. The English instructors liked one biology teacher's assignment of having students write about a fantastic voyage into the world of a cell. We all knew the challenges of grading and handling the paper load, of time management and teacher evaluation. We laughed at David Gottshall's jokes in all the same places, from a shared knowing and common bond of experience in the college classroom.

By the time we took our excursion to see Pele's lava pouring into the sea, we were one bonded group of happy campers. Maybe it was all that Korean barbecue we devoured together the night before or the clear, chill air and starry skies. Whatever the mystique, we were friends by then, not just a group of teachers at a workshop.

When I think back to that summer of 1991, I'll probably remember people first: Don, the automotive teacher who also counsels drug abusers; David, the biology teacher who wrestles snakes in class and does an Arkansas pig call that would wake the dead; or Connie, the beaming early childhood instructor who led us in song our last morning together.

Then I'll remember why we were there: to rediscover why we chose teaching.

GREAT _____ RETREATS

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FOR OUTCOMES

Cindy Hoss, Butler County Community College
Bill Searle, Asnuntuck Community-Technical College

What makes Great _____ Retreats so beneficial for both individuals and institutions? While every retreat is different because participants bring their uniqueness, a remarkable similarity of responses occurs in evaluations. Whether they attended a Great Teachers Retreat, a Great Counselors Retreat, or a Great Staff Retreat, participants overwhelmingly report positive experiences. Words like "renewal," "re-commitment," "confidence," "desire," "and "fun" appear in response after response.

What follows is a representative sampling of outcomes reported by various Great _____ Retreat participants.

Participants report:

- * A renewed sense of why they chose their profession (A common comment from faculty is, "Now I remember why I became a community college teacher.")
- * Feeling more creative
- * Increased openness to new ideas
- * Plans to try out several new ideas
NOTE: Implementation of new ideas seems to improve if there is some follow-up after the Retreat
- * More positive attitudes about their jobs and institutions
- * Friendlier and more relaxed behavior among colleagues
- * Making new friends with whom they stay in touch (even if from the same campus)
- * Expanded respect for others working in their profession/college
- * If a mix of part time and full time employees, full time employees gain more regard for the dedication and involvement of the part timers

- * Being more trusting in their relationships
- * A higher level of willingness to share problems, explore solutions, and accept advice
- * Amazement at how open other people are to talking about problems and to searching "for practical solutions"
- * Pleasure at the reaction of other professionals to their concerns and ideas
- * Enlarged appreciation for the working style of others (for example, increased understanding of the teaching challenges facing faculty members in other disciplines)
- * Surprise at how a positive approach to sharing ideas and problems can affect the entire problem solving approach
- * Increased recognition of the need to connect with others to share successes and problems (this seems particularly important to faculty and counselors)
- * Wonder at how many ideas came forward in such a short time
- * More interest in professional development
- * Awareness of several new resources relating to their profession, and use of some of them [again, the "use" seems to increase when there is some sort of follow-up activity]
- * Elevated levels of professional development activity following the Retreat
- * Greater confidence in handling concerns and problems
- * Renewed commitment to students
- * Wonder that there are not more Great _____ Retreats (A common response is "This is the best professional development experience in my career at the college. Why aren't more of these available!?!")

In short, the Great _____ Retreat format works!

THE GREAT SUPPORT STAFF RETREAT: TRAINING THE TRAINERS

Patrick Parks
Elgin Community College

My introduction to participant-directed retreats came in 1982, when I attended my first Great Teachers Workshop in Iowa. Years later, I was asked to help facilitate a Great Support Staff Retreat sponsored by the Northern Area Network of Staff Developers in Illinois.

The eventual success of the retreat, I believe, was due to the determination and vision of the five Northern Area Network members who organized the event. Their plan addressed two issues:

1. to provide participants with an opportunity to rejuvenate and meet their peers,
2. to serve as a training session, preparing the participants to return to their campuses to organize retreats for their own staffs.

Planning

All of us involved in the planning believed the two-level approach--experiencing and then examining the process--would promote participant-directed workshops in a way no presentation by any expert ever could. Because we were (and are) committed to the method, our first concern was to make certain enough people heard about the retreat and were encouraged by their institutions to attend. In the literature we distributed, we highlighted the unique benefits of participant-directed retreats. We also emphasized our hope that the people who came would be willing to bring this important staff development activity back home.

Along with the focus on publicizing the retreat, planning also included looking into retreat models, including the Great Teachers Workshop, the organizational retreats regularly offered at College of DuPage, and The Support Staff Getaway, sponsored by Ontario's Western Region Professional Development Committee. From these models, we shaped a retreat to serve our dual purpose.

Preparing for the Retreat

In preparation for the retreat, each participant was asked to write short papers--one describing a success, the other a workplace challenge--as well as suggested topics the person would be willing to present in a discussion session. Each was also informed of the few rules we would be imposing upon their arrival:

1. no last names or job titles,
2. no revelation of area of responsibility or institution,
3. no leaving the retreat site.

We invited them, too, to bring along any books or journal articles, videotapes or other helpful materials for a resource center.

The site we selected for the retreat, George Williams College Lake Geneva Campus, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, proved ideal for our needs. Besides comfortable--albeit rustic--accommodations and plenty of good food, there was room for both large and small group activities. The typical rainy and cold October weather, unfortunately, was not so ideal. We learned that the key to any retreat of this kind was the ability of the staff to remain cheerfully flexible.

Running the Retreat

Our schedule allowed for flexibility, so changes were easily made during our two-and-a-half days. On the first day, we met as a large group and did an icebreaker that focused on styles of leadership. This icebreaker was selected based upon our theme for the retreat--to improve the organizational structure of our community colleges. Following that, we broke into small groups to discuss the success and challenge papers.

Only a few people had sent in topics for the small group sessions planned for day two, so we decided to use the challenges as subjects for discussion. There was free time for the participants before dinner, while the staff met to discuss the process.

BaFa BaFa

After dinner, we all took part in BaFa BaFa, a simulation that illustrates cultural differences and how difficult it is to communicate if one doesn't understand a culture. This activity, because it was enjoyable and instructive, brought the participants together.

Day Two

The second day began with a planning session, during which the participants compiled a list of challenges they wanted to spend more time addressing. A vote was taken, eight topics selected, and four concurrent sessions were scheduled.

Because the topics were selected by the participants, all sessions but one ended positively; the one exception was a discussion that centered on "the glass ceiling." Fortunately, our staff facilitator kept the group from becoming too depressed. Therefore, people left determined to look into

ways by which they could continue to move up the ladder of promotion.

When the small group sessions concluded, the participants met to plan for the evening's planned event--an Olympics competition designed to emphasize team-building--and to relax.

After dinner, the Olympics began with the traditional parade of nations. Although they expressed initial doubts about what we were asking them to do, the participants entered in surprisingly outlandish "native" garb. Most were bearing flags and banners, singing national anthems of their own devising, and dancing "traditional" dances of their respective countries.

Day Three

The next morning we spent explaining and examining the retreat process, answering questions and encouraging the participants to go home as campus proponents for their own retreats. This was also the time when identities were revealed, so time was spent learning more about each other's jobs and campuses. It was a long and busy morning, and a fitting end to the first Great Support Staff Retreat.

Reflections

Clearly the event was a success, but not one without some room for improvement. There were little logistical problems that cropped up. We needed a better contingency plan for inclement weather. Informal but guided learning opportunities needed more time and attention. The resource center, for example was under-used and, unfortunately, poorly situated.

Our retreat-related problems can be easily remedied. However, the chief concern we had subsequently was the failure of any of the participants to organize a retreat among their staff.

Undoubtedly, time is the biggest factor working against these people. But, even in these times of upheaval--and perhaps even because of the upheaval--institutions need to emphasize and encourage more staff development activities. A participant-directed retreat is one activity that gets staff involved in a unique way.

GREAT RETREATS AT GOLDEN WEST

Sharon A. Ratliffe
Golden West College

The impetus for Golden West College's Great Retreats came from our response to California's staff development program budgeting, starting in 1989. During the spring of 1989, the college's advisory committee proposed a staff development plan that included a Great Teachers Seminar. We were on our way!

Dick Ryerson, staff development coordinator at Mt. San Antonio College, served as lead facilitator. Dick mentored our team while facilitating our first three-day "Celebration of Great Teaching" Workshop. He used a train-the-trainer format, providing us with skills to offer future events.

We offered a second seminar for faculty and added a two-day workshop for classified staff in 1990-91. Two of our classified staff members attended a classified event at Mt. San Antonio College to provide them with training to facilitate our workshop. They were joined by two vocational faculty and myself to form the facilitation team.

In our third year (1991-92), our second "Celebration of Great Classified Staff" Workshop was facilitated by an all-classified staff team plus myself. In addition, a "Celebration of Great Management" Workshop was held in a one and one-half day format. Using the same site for these workshops as well as our second Great Teaching workshop provided some common ground for on-campus discussions among different participants.

In 1992-93, our first campus-wide workshop used the Great Retreat format to involve students and individuals from all employee classifications in a three-day activity to define the Golden West College model of shared governance. Our 1993-94 follow-up workshop used the same format.

Also, in March 1994, the essential components of the Great Retreat format were telescoped into a one-day workshop on leadership and communication for classified staff. Classified staff members themselves facilitated this workshop.

Statement of need

Great Retreats provide sustained, uninterrupted time within a supportive, relaxed context for genuine dialogue among peers. This format consistently and predictably promotes open communication in ways that build trust. Most participants return to campus with a desire to replicate the process for other colleagues and students.

Statement of success

There are many positive results of Great Retreats. Four repeated consequences provide a compelling rationale for the value of such events.

1. Universality. On campus, most individuals focus primarily on their own agenda and tasks. Faculty, particularly, are isolated from each other once they enter their classroom. One outcome of the Great Retreats is a heightened, tangible awareness of the universalities that exist in teaching (or staffing or managing). With this sense of universality can come a realization of what it means for a student to be placed in a learning context characterized by the arbitrary pigeonholing of content into disciplines, or courses.
2. Renewal and rededication. The awareness of universality achieved through open communication builds a sense of community. Out of this sense of community and shared mission comes individual renewal. A parallel phenomenon is a sense of rededication to one's personal purpose, the goals of the participants present, and the mission and goals of the college.
3. Celebration. Celebration is a third outcome of these events. There is a celebration of the immediate context -- communicating together over a few intense days about what the participants do on campus in their professional roles or work life. Most participants find that others really are interesting, involved, and competent people!
4. Great _____ as Student. Finally, the participants in a Great Retreat are in the role of learner. They experience exciting alternatives to the lecture and other traditional methods of teaching. They also experience the risks and thrills of being engaged in the learning process. As students themselves, they can see our own students with clearer vision.

These four positive consequences of Great Retreats directly lead to increased student success in institution.

Essential components of great retreats

While there are many possible components of a Great Retreat, there are six elements that have been essential in each of our events. These components include:

1. An opening ice-breaker that introduces participants to each other as persons, not as workers attached to a specific department or discipline within the institution. We use no titles.

2. Preparation prior to the workshop of paragraphs on personal successes and challenges in the participant's classroom or work site.
3. Small group discussions of individual successes and then a change in group membership followed by discussions of the challenges, or problems. In both discussions, concentration is on the universalities.
4. Problem-solving groups focused on topics generated from the discussion of innovations and challenges. Group membership is voluntary. People are encouraged to move among groups. A structure for taking solutions back to campus is important, and part of our discussions.
5. A large group closing concentrating on two areas. First, participants specify how they will follow up on the workshop during the first week back on campus. Second, we have a celebratory conclusion in which the participants receive a momentum symbolic of their work together during the workshop.

Along with these essential components there must be planned time for informal activities, contemplation, and social activities. Serious discussion must be mixed with opportunities to play together.

The facilitation team must be flexible and demonstrate keen listening skills. The staff must help participants shape the workshop to meet their needs.

How to

The five components of our format assure us the predictable success of our Great Retreats. However, it is also essential to tailor the workshop to the specific needs of the participants or special theme, if one exists. "Flexibility" and "change" are key words to our facilitation teams. In every Great Retreat, participants revise the schedule.

The entire process, from inception to the evaluation of the workshop, must model open communication and inclusiveness.

Prior to the Workshop

Our workshops have always included an open call for members of the facilitation team. The facilitation team always works closely with me, as staff development coordinator and lead facilitator, on all phases of each retreat. This gives all an ownership of the activities that they might not otherwise have.

All individuals within the unit for which the workshops have been intended (i.e., all full time and adjunct faculty or all employees for the campus wide events) receive workshop publicity. Selection criteria are clearly described (i.e., one person from all units before a second participant is selected from the same unit -- or first time participants before participants who have attended previous events).

During the Workshop

In the large group sessions, we typically listen for and highlight successful methods of teaching (or staffing, or managing) that emerge during small group sessions.

We use a values clarification activity as an event followed by social time. In this activity, several values statements (usually containing the word "should") are stated. Participants "think with their feet" by walking to a side of the room that most closely represents their attitude. Individuals on each side may express their reasoning for being in that location. People may change locations during the discussion. We debrief this exercise with anonymous writing that is later shared with the full group.

Often we open a workshop with brief anonymous sharing of one-sentence statements written on cards and passed in the large circle. The statements finish the stem, "A great _____ (teacher, classified staffer, manager) . . . " Similarly, we close the workshop with anonymous sharing of, "Great _____ (teaching, staffing, managing) is . . . "

Following the Workshop

The first morning following the workshop, I have consistently placed four items in participant mailboxes.

- (1) a list of participants and their phone extensions,
- (2) a group picture,
- (3) a summary of the outcomes of problem solving groups,
- (4) a summary of the participants workshop evaluations.

We believe this provides participants with a tangible awareness of their new support group on campus.

We use our monthly staff development newsletter to reinforce retreat themes. In the issue following a workshop, the anonymous one-sentence statements are published along with the reports of the problem-solving groups.

Also, many workshop groups have a reunion sometime during the year following their workshop.

The major question to address is how to sustain the energy and climate of the workshop back on campus. Here there is a benefit to doing retreats that focus on single campuses. There is a built-in support group. Still, this is an area for faculty and staff development professionals to

concentrate on.

A second issue is providing support for follow up on solutions to problems that emerge in the workshop discussions. Following some workshops, groups of participants have made presentations before appropriate groups within our governance structure. Tangible positive changes have occurred -- some immediately, others taking three to four years. Here also there is a benefit when doing a retreat focusing on a single campus, because more people are immediately involved.

CONNECTICUT'S GREAT TEACHER SEMINAR

THE BARNES SEMINAR ON TEACHING

Bill Searle
Asnuntuck Community College

Introduction

A bright red sun settles slowly into the ocean off the Connecticut shore as groups of us watch from the beach. LeRoy Barnes, our "Great Teacher Seminar" leader, reminds us that location is not important. No one cares if they are in a beautiful, restful, spacious retreat on the beach or stuck in a small, on-campus classroom. Right!

Disconnecting minds from crowded classrooms, inadequate offices, student tests, faculty meetings, etc. is essential. A beautiful location, lots of areas for small groups to gather and talk, places to walk, and space -- just space -- helps faculty connect with each other in new ways.

"Great" style retreats must build a learning community quickly. Since our seminar is less than three days long, we must build this community in hours. Everything about the seminar must focus on this goal.

Why Have a Great . . . ?

"Great" style retreats capitalize on the fact that college faculty and staff generally enjoy talking. Still, lots of talk does not guarantee change. Does our "great teacher" seminar get results? Yes. Can we prove it? Maybe.

First, the Center for Teaching itself is a result of a "Great" style retreat for faculty, Academic Deans, and Presidents to explore ways of promoting faculty development in our state.

Since the Center began in 1987, we have used our annual Barnes Seminar on Teaching (recently named that since LeRoy retired) to recruit local campus leaders. We now bring new faculty leaders into the Center by first having them serve as staff at our seminar.

Every statewide project that we run, and many local campus projects, began as a result of participants in our seminar getting together to pursue an idea. For example, several people's desire to share their colleagues' innovation papers lead to our monthly newsletter on teaching.

Does the Center work? Our state Council of Presidents, Council of Academic Deans, and the union representing faculty (which also contributes money!) all regularly endorse the Center. It is

considered the model of faculty-management cooperation in the state.

On a different level, can we prove that faculty have changed their teaching because of the seminar? No. We have no proof. We do have tremendous amounts of anecdotal evidence. Do participants say they have changed their teaching because of the seminar? Yes. Most of our participants say things like, "I learned more about teaching and learning in three days than I did at any other seminar or course I ever took."

It Works If You Work It

AGENDA

Our agenda is absolutely rigid in four areas.

1. Everything starts on schedule.
2. Everything ends on schedule.
3. Half the time is unscheduled.
4. We use no experts (all staff are teachers themselves).

Adhering to starting and ending times is more difficult than it appears. Once faculty start talking . . . Our solution is placing a staff facilitator in every formal group (please refer to "STAFF" heading for more information about staff).

Why so much unscheduled time? Our job is helping people connect with others to discuss issues significant to them. Openness, trust, and time are important factors in producing a willingness to change. Unscheduled hours provide people with the control necessary to this process.

How do we start sessions on time? An old school bell provokes gales of laughter! We also emphasize that attendance at sessions is strictly voluntary. The bell is merely a reminder.

Since the agenda for most "Great . . ." retreats is essentially similar, ours will not be explained in detail. What follows are highlights and ideas that others may find interesting.

IN THE BEGINNING

During the orientation session, our leader and staff set a tone that is participative, professional, relaxed, and fun. By sitting on the floor lower than participants' seats, walking around, jointly describing how the seminar operates, and having fun, we model behaviors we wish to encourage.

Since we use humor to loosen people up, our initial ice breakers are experiential and funny. Hopefully, our humor peels away the layers of stiff "professionalism" within all of us (at least it works for the staff). After the orientation, we run three, one hour sessions where participants are mixed, and remixed, to share Idea Papers (other retreats call them "Innovation Papers").

Colored headbands identify initial small group membership (with the explanation that 20 years ago we would have handed out waistbands, but as the faculty has aged we cannot afford that much fabric).

During each early group session, staff facilitators gently emphasize several "rules." Focus on teaching and learning. Respect each other. No complaining. Be positive. We are the experts. Support each other. Everyone must speak. There is a time limit on discussion. Groups end on time. Only one person in the group may speak at a time. People who need to talk more are encouraged to pursue discussions during free time.

After the first small group session, the full group convenes briefly. We reiterate that our goal is to expose everyone to as many different ideas as possible. We also explain that many ideas presented become the focus of the agenda for the second and third days.

Remixing the group for the second small group session is seemingly chaotic. The staff "fights" over people, argues about who gets the best spot on the beach, who gets the shade, etc. Four minutes of funny anarchy convinces people we must be crazy and unfreezes even hardened academics. Essentially the same process "creates" the third set of groups.

By the third small group session, some people are with others they have heard before. While we originally thought this would produce some boredom, it appears that people who have been together more than once spend more free time with each other.

FLAGS

In a location with plenty of space, finding your group can be a problem. Humorous "flags" on large poles that every facilitator carries solve the problem. Naturally the staff publicly fights over the "most intelligent" flag, the "most scholarly" flag, or simply "the best" flag!

THE TALKING STICK

Put fifty faculty in a room and you get side conversations. While we want informal discussions, we also want the full group sessions to be effective. This means no side conversations.

Our solution is "The Talking Stick." At the first full group meeting after the orientation, the seminar leader produces The Talking Stick (a venerable branch festooned with incredibly tacky items). While the discussion is humorous, the message is not -- you may speak in the full group only when holding The Talking Stick.

EVENINGS

Evenings are important because most participants do not know each other. The first day, after a long supper break, we convene voluntary Mini-Lesson sessions. While everyone has the option to present a mini-lesson, no one has to. Groups of seven to ten provide constructive feedback to

each other in sessions that may last until midnight!

By the second evening it is time for serious fun. Our "murder mystery" begins with the afternoon social hour, continues sporadically through supper, and culminates with a generally hilarious team-based hunt for clues. Since we write our mysteries, it is a wonderful opportunity to poke fun at our colleges and ourselves. Of course, the staff-actors generally display an inability to follow directions, "forget" the script, and require lots of help from the participants to remember what is happening.

SEMINAR WRAP-UP

Endings are important. Participants need a sense of completion, and a way to link the seminar to what they will do on campus. We take a full half day.

"What inspires me about teaching" is a phrase that links emotion, philosophy, and friendship. The Talking Stick appears as we conduct a full group meeting. The Talking Stick quickly moves from friend to friend until everyone responds to that phrase. Some need time to compose themselves, some cry, some grab pens and paper to jot down memorable ideas, but everyone is involved. Remembering what keeps us teaching through the tough times, many speak of the inspiration received from other teachers.

We help disengagement by ending with "awards" that range from the moderately serious to the absolutely foolish. While the staff presents many "awards," participants also may (and do!) make presentations.

Concerned about what happens after people return to campus? So are we. Three years ago we added a final exercise that forges a direct link. Each participant gets paper and two envelopes and has twenty minutes to write down one teaching innovation that she/he will attempt in the fall. One copy goes into a self-addressed envelope. A second copy goes into an envelope addressed to someone else at the seminar. The envelopes go to the seminar administrator, who mails them six months later. At that time we urge participants to call each other to share experiences and ideas. Reports are that the reminder is effective.

STAFFING

We feel it is too difficult for one person to both administer the seminar and be the seminar leader, so we separate those jobs. The seminar administrator handles all of the administration before, during, and after the event. The seminar leader runs the seminar itself, including training the seminar staff. Since 1990, we have had co-leaders because of the size of our group.

Seminar staff are faculty who attended a previous seminar. A ratio of six participants per staff member seems comfortable, since every formal group during the seminar has a staff facilitator.

Prior to the seminar we conduct a session for staff facilitators covering how we run the seminar, why we act the way we do, what we hope to achieve, and basic group facilitation skills.

The seminar leader gathers the staff twice daily to discuss events, compare notes on progress (or lack thereof), and do final planning. THIS IS IMPORTANT. Staff must feel connected to the seminar as a whole and each other (and, problems can occur even between close friends!).

CAUTIONS

When running a Great Retreat in a single state or institution, the chief danger is that people start sharing war stories. Quickly and gently cutting these off is crucial. Once started, war stories are extremely difficult to stop.

A second major difficulty is that many faculty do not have effective group work skills. Staff facilitators must carefully reinforce effective communications processes. The "slash and burn" discussions typical of many faculty meetings are inappropriate.

IDEA AND CHALLENGE PAPERS

Every participant brings multiple copies of a paper explaining a teaching idea, and a second paper outlining a "teaching challenge." The "Idea Paper" title came about because many faculty felt they did not have an "innovation." Calling them "Idea Papers" seems to reduce the professional anxiety inherent in the word "innovation." You might consider why these words seem important to faculty in the context of why the "Great" style retreats work so well.

At the seminar, we ask participants to grant us permission to reprint their paper in our newsletter. Nearly 2500 full and part time faculty, Academic Deans, and Presidents in our system thus get to read 15 to 20 different Idea Papers per year.

What Else Do You Need to Consider?

Put sunrise and sunset on the agenda. It sends a message.

Thanks to Toby Sutton (Greenfield Master Teacher Seminar), we regularly allow people to ask for polls. A poll is a question that can be easily answered, such as "How many of you are starting next fall before Labor Day?" Although we are almost all from the same state, many faculty know little about other colleges. As people begin to hear answers, some get extremely interested in learning more. Questions and answers provide the grist for informal discussions.

At least once during the seminar run a "Quick Hits" full group session. A "Quick Hit" is a teaching tip that can be explained in less than four minutes. Although we repeatedly stress that sharing a tip is voluntary, almost everyone does. Pens fly as people mutter "oh yeh," "YES!," and "ahhh."

Get the biggest name tags you can. Bring lots of extras. Be absolutely rigid that people print their FIRST NAME only, in large letters, and wear their name tag at all time. No title. No discipline. No college name. No exceptions.

Lay snacks around. There must be something about food that lubricates faculty minds. If possible, get Larry Fujinaka of the Hawai'i Great Teachers Seminar to send you some chocolate-covered macadamia nuts. Please do not tell him where you read about them.

Consider taking everyone's picture and posting them with names. Sometimes people need help finding each other.

Have fun. Have lots of fun. It is infectious.

Resources

One objective of our Center for Teaching is to have our faculty write about teaching. Therefore, we try to bring material written by community college faculty, especially our own, to the Seminar.

Also, we ask participants to bring a copy of one book and one article about teaching-life-learning that they feel will interest others. Networking is easier when you have lots for people to share ideas about!

Final Word

The best way to decide if a "Great" style retreat will work with your group is to attend one. The excitement is catching.

GREAT SEMINARS AT A SINGLE COLLEGE

ILLINOIS CENTRAL COLLEGE

Julie Vaughn
Illinois Central College

Illinois Central College is committed to the Great Teacher Seminar (GTS) format, not only for faculty, but also for other College employee groups. We have offered eight Great Teacher Seminars, one Great Classified Staff Seminar, one Great Professional Support Staff Seminar, one Great Custodial Staff Seminar and two Great Leadership Seminars. We believe the GTS format works for all, provided the "minimal rigid structure" is followed.

We use the following structure and key elements for all Great Seminars:

1. The leader and facilitators have been participants in a Great Seminar and have been through an informal training program.
2. We use our own employees to staff the seminars whenever possible.
3. Diversity is the key to success.
4. Titles and positions from the workplace do not exist at the seminars.
5. Seminars are held off-campus.
6. Participants create the agenda.
7. Less is more.
8. Good food and beverages smooth conversations.
9. Our overall goal is to celebrate Illinois Central College.
10. The Seminars have support from the President's Cabinet and the Board of Trustees.

All of our Great _____ Seminars follow these commandments:

- a. Thou shalt be on time.
- b. Thou shalt wear thy name tag.

- c. Thou shalt provide equal time.
- d. Thou shalt not hold back.
- e. Thou shalt not gripe.
- f. Thou shalt not idly show and tell.
- g. Thou shalt not use comparative systems.
- h. Thou shalt mutually enforce all the above commandments.

Great Custodial Staff and Great Classified Staff Seminars (GCS and GCSS)

These are one-day retreats facilitated by trained Illinois Central College personnel. Each participant brings a brief summary of both an innovation and a challenge from their workplace. As with all Great Seminars, discussions center on these papers. However, ice-breakers and team activities are also focal points of the seminars, as people get to know each other more thoroughly. Enhanced communication, stronger teams, and a better appreciation for colleagues and the institution are the results.

Great Professional Support Staff (GPSS)

This three-day retreat for middle managers includes the activities of the GCSS and the GCS, but in an expanded format that allows for more unstructured time. This time enables participants to talk with each other informally. We also encourage participation in team activities such as volleyball and group hikes. The evenings also include structured team building activities. We believe that the team building activities are a special strength of this seminar.

Great Leadership Seminar (GLS)

The format of the GLS is similar to the GPSS. One difference is that hierarchical relationships are more difficult to leave behind and could become an issue. Territorial concerns and political processes could become deterrents to the success of this type of seminar.

Positive, productive communication must occur for this seminar to be successful. We use leaders from other institutions and our staff as facilitators, with careful instructions to quickly and carefully handle "political" talk. With some special attention by our facilitators, we have kept conversations useful.

Evaluation

The informal evaluation process for all Great Seminars is the same. Participants are encouraged to write their thoughts about the process and outcomes of the seminar and send them to the Director of Staff Development. Their responses identify enhancements for the next seminar. All responses are forwarded to the executive staff of the college. This provides that group with direct information about the success of each particular workshop. It also builds trust in the seminar leadership among the executive staff.

The responses have been so positive that our Seminars have support from both the President's Cabinet and the Board of Trustees.

What are the special problems of offering a "Great Staff" retreat?

While the same underlying principles guide all great retreats, we make allowances for the unique nature of each employee group. For example, every group can benefit from enhanced communication, camaraderie, and team building exercises, but the particular activities change based upon the interests of participants.

What works with teachers may not work with staff. Thus, the schedule adapts to these varying needs, but always follows the retreat objectives and the minimal rigid structure.

The problem of time away from the job is more an issue for single college staff retreats than for most Great Teacher Seminars. Any single GTS includes only a small fraction of the total faculty, and with some planning their classes and workload can be adjusted to accommodate the seminar. However, even at an institution the size of Illinois Central College, some Great Retreats have included a majority of the employees from a particular group. This can be problematic; it is part of the reason that some retreats are shorter than others.

Are there issues that are peculiar to staff retreats?

There are issues that are unique to each employee group. These must be addressed in the planning of each great retreat. Our Director of Staff Development keeps in close touch with each of the employee advisory groups, and makes special efforts to address especially "hot" issues before they become a problem at a seminar. For example, the Great Leadership Seminars have been staffed only with facilitators from other institutions or our own experienced administrators, not faculty or the staff members who help with the other seminars. In addition, the staff for each seminar must be very sensitive to issues that emerge during the seminars; occasionally, this has resulted in schedule changes during a seminar. However, since schedule changes and modifications to fit the particular needs of each seminar's participants are an integral part of every

Great _____ Retreat, this is certainly not a problem.

What is lost in translating something originally aimed at teachers into staff?

The only thing "lost" in making these modifications is that the focus of the discussions is on topics different from those most important to classroom teachers. This is not really a loss. By the very nature of Great Seminars, the participants set the agenda, discussing topics that are most important to them. Even in situations where several seminars have been held for the same employee group, each group sets their own agenda. Thus, one of the underlying principles of such retreats automatically adjusts for the varying concerns of different groups.

What is our follow-up to the retreats? Are we satisfied with our follow-up?

We have created a GTnewS letter and host annual get-togethers. Also, we have a monthly meeting for all administrators that is an outgrowth of their first retreat. The fact that we offer so many Great Retreats shows that our college leadership and Board of Trustees strongly support this type of professional development program. The best follow-up to a Great Retreat is another one!

RESOURCES

You already have most of the resources you need to run an excellent Great _____ Retreat. They are your faculty and/or staff. If you have never been to a Great _____ Retreat, you will be absolutely astounded by the energy and ideas.

The next resources are the people who are running or facilitating Great _____ Retreats today. First, talk to the people who wrote these articles, then find David Gottshall. In the East, call Nancy Latour or Les Rosenbloom of the New York State Great Teachers Seminar. In the Mid-West, see John Baker of the Iowa Great Teachers' Workshop or Jim Slater of the Missouri Great Teachers Seminar. In the West, try Mike McHargue or Cindra Smith in California. Incidentally, finding these professionals is easy -- simply remember your NCSPOD Human Resources Directory!

David Gottshall has a bias about Great _____ Retreats that I share. You do not learn about them by reading. You learn about them by attending.

However, if you must read something, here are some ideas.

For the history and flavor of Great Teachers, read The History & Nature of the National Great Teachers Movement, David Gottshall, College of DuPage, 1993.

For a cogent piece on why the format works, study "The Great Teachers Format: Why Does It Work?" written by Cindra Smith for the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas, Austin (1995).

For a quick overview of how to plan a Great _____ Retreat, look over "The Great Teacher Movement: Teachers, Teamwork, and Action" in MasterStrokes, April 1993. Cindra Smith has also produced informative short pieces on various aspects of Great _____ Retreats for the Community College League of California.

For information for people at a particular retreat, Helen Burnstad of Johnson County has very high quality material -- and lots of it!

STARTING A GREAT _____ RETREAT

Wonderful! You will be very pleased with the results. Fortunately, this type of seminar is not impossible to run. Unfortunately, they are not as simple as they appear. Creating a positive atmosphere, maintaining a rigid non-structure, and actively facilitating open discussions takes skills.

Here are the steps we recommend you take to produce successful Great _____ Retreats.

1. Attend at least one Great _____ Retreat yourself. Have at least one other person attend a retreat.
2. Ask around for experienced Great _____ Retreat leaders in your area (and observe the leaders in the one you attend). Share your interests, concerns, and any special emphasis you plan for your Great _____ Retreat with potential leaders. Some leaders handle only Great Teachers, or Great Counselors Retreats. Others may have just the experience you need.
3. For your first Great _____ Retreat, hire an experienced leader and her/his full team. As part of your agreement, have two local people who have attended Great _____ Retreats serve as junior staff facilitators. Make certain that the leader knows that these two people will be the core of your own Retreat leadership. Have the leader train your people to eventually take over your Retreat.
4. Send two or three people to a different Great _____ Retreat to expand your pool of potential staff.
5. For your second Great _____ Retreat, hire an experienced leader and some of his/her staff. Move the local people who served as junior staff facilitators up to full staff facilitators, and bring in at least two more junior facilitators. The two new facilitators must have experienced at least one Great _____ Retreat. Once more, tell the leader that you want extra training for all of your people so they can eventually run the Retreat themselves.
6. For your third Great _____ Retreat, hire an experienced leader and provide all the staff from your local people. Have at least one person identified as next year's leader. Make certain the experienced leader you hire knows that you want her/him to provide extra time to that person. Also, be sure that there are plenty of staff meetings for full discussion of concerns and problems.
7. Use your own leadership and staff for your fourth Great _____ Retreat. Provide time

for discussion, refresher training, and problem solving prior to the seminar. During the seminar include extra time for staff meetings.

One word of caution. Be prepared to have far more volunteers for staff positions than you need! The enthusiasm is contagious. One of your problems will probably be finding some space on the staff to bring new people in. However, bringing some new people in regularly is important in building a community of people.

The useful aspect of having plenty of volunteers is that you can probably spin off new Great _____ Retreats for different audiences. Departments, divisions, statewide organizations, boards, large committees or task forces -- all sorts of groups can profit from a Great _____ Retreat.

Incidentally, continue sending people to other Great _____ Retreats. New ideas, approaches, and concepts develop everywhere. Networking helps your retreat stay fresh.

Sample Schedules

PROPOSED SCHEDULE
NEW YORK STATE GREAT TEACHERS SEMINAR
(RIGID MINIMAL STRUCTURE)

DAY 1

5:00 - 6:00 p.m.	Social Hour
6:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Dinner
7:30 - 9:00 p.m.	Large Group Introductions/Overview

DAY 2

9:00 - 12:00 a.m.	Small Groups Instructional Innovations (papers)
12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.	Small Groups Problem Solving (papers)
3:00 - 5:30 p.m.	Break
5:30 - 6:00 p.m.	Social Half Hour
6:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Dinner
7:30 - 9:00 p.m.	Large Group Non-Astounding Teaching Device

DAY 3

9:00 - 12:00 a.m.	Small Groups The Unpaper or "The Real Problem"
12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.	Small Groups Agenda Setting
	Topic Session #1
3:00 - 5:30 p.m.	Break
5:30 - 6:00 p.m.	Social Half Hour
6:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Dinner
7:30 - 9:00 p.m.	Small Groups Topic Session #2

DAY 4

9:00 - 12:00 a.m.	Small Groups Topic Session #3
12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 - 5:30 p.m.	Break Out on Your Own Time
5:30 - 6:00 p.m.	Social Half Hour
6:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Dinner
7:30 - 9:00 p.m.	Large Group Values Clarifications/Sorting

DAY 5

9:00 - 9:30 a.m.	Large Group Share Publication of Your Choice
9:30 - 10:30 a.m.	Small Group In Search of the Great Teacher (Exercise)

10:30 - 12:00 p.m. Large Group Showtime/Comments/Graduation
Departure

1995 HAWAII GREAT TEACHERS SEMINAR
TENTATIVE AGENDA
July 23 - 28, 1995

July 23, Sunday

2:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Registration
	Cabin check-in
4:30 p.m.	Reception
5:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.	Evening Session
9:00 - 10:00 p.m.	Social Hour

July 24, Monday

7:30 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Morning Session
11:30 a.m.	Lunch
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.	Afternoon Session
5:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.	Evening Session
9:00 - 10:00 p.m.	Social Hour

July 25, Tuesday

7:30 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Morning Session
11:30 a.m.	Lunch
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.	Afternoon Session
5:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.	Evening Session
9:00 - 10:00 p.m.	Social Hour

July 26, Wednesday

7:30 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Morning Session
11:30 a.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m.	Free Time-Optional Field Trip
5:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 p.m.	Free Time
9:00 - 10:00 p.m.	Social Hour

July 27, Thursday

7:30 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Morning Session
11:30 a.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m.	Free Time-Optional Field Trip

5:00 - 8:00 p.m.	"Aloha Night" Reception
9:00 - 10:00 p.m.	Social Hour

July 28, Friday

7:30 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Morning Session
11:30 a.m.	Lunch
12 noon	Check-out

FEEDBACK FORM

We need your help to make the NCSPOD professional development series as useful as possible. Please take a few minutes to fill out this feedback form and send it to the current Vice President for Publications (look at the latest newsletter). Please do not include your name. Thank you for your time!

One specific aspect of the publication that helped me was

One specific aspect of the publication that interfered with my comprehension was

One specific suggestion I have for improvement is

Publication: In Search of Great _____ Retreats