I see isolation as a key problem in academia and the Teaching Academy as an ideal place to build a community of teachers and leaders.

Short courses are the very backbone of our efforts to create community; therefore, I design and teach a half dozen collaborative short courses each year.

The Teaching Academy also offers many one-time workshops, a few scholarships to teaching conferences, and some one-on-one help for NMSU educators.

Because all of our programs are expensive, and the operating budget is small, we raise money from participants through donations, which also builds community.

The culmination of our yearly programs is a celebratory gala for all our donors and members.

The Academy measures our success by the response of the community of teachers: how many come to our 150 workshops per year (more than 1,000 unique participants), how they evaluate the workshops (6.0 on a 7.0 scale), and how often they return for more workshops (more than 300 educators earn a membership by participating in ten or more hours of workshops in a year).

The NMSU Teaching Academy has received national and international recognition ten times in its first ten years; I have also received eight awards for teaching or service.

For ways to improve, I listen to myself and others. Ideas that came from others include the membership system as well as the Innovation and the Outstanding Workshop awards.

I am helping establish the University Teaching Council; helping Shawn launch a peer mentoring group for department heads; helping Sharon design and launch a Blended Learning Boot Camp and an online mentoring program; and helping Mark raise money.
Responsibilities

As director of the New Mexico State University (NMSU) Teaching Academy, I help the Academy pursue its vision, mission and goals. The vision is that the NMSU Teaching Academy helps NMSU educators develop extraordinary teaching lives embedded in exceptional careers. The mission is to provide training, mentoring and networking. The ADVANCE goals are to foster diversity, advance leaders and enhance careers. The Teaching Academy goals are to support teachers, improve learning and build community. Although some would argue that building community is the least of these goals, I argue that community is the very foundation upon which the goals of improving learning and advancing leadership are built. It is by developing a community of teachers and leaders that educators begin to learn from each other and from outside experts.

As director of the NMSU Teaching Academy, I was charged with elevating the status of teaching on campus. The Academy was the brainchild of one of our former presidents and was embraced by faculty. In 2003, the former Center for Educational Development became the Teaching Academy when the name was changed and I was hired as director. The Academy has six full-time equivalent positions. Two faculty developers work on instructional development, one face-to-face and the other online. A third works on organizational development, especially advancing leadership. Career support is provided both by educating pre-tenure faculty (promotion and tenure) and by educating their leaders (a leadership program and a department head forum). In addition, we have a half-time fundraiser and event planner, as well as a half-time bookkeeper who handles all personnel matters and all money for the unit. We have an admin who handles “behind the scenes” matters. Excluding staff salaries, we have an annual budget from the state of about $70,000 and donations that total $30,000 per year.

As director, I also set the Academy’s direction. I advocate for teachers and teaching and maintain a high profile for the Academy. I help our other three faculty developers and our fundraiser do their jobs, while the other staff members (an admin and a half-time bookkeeper) help the rest of us do our jobs. I build a team among staff members and manage the budget. I design and deliver both one-time workshops and short courses. I search the country looking for the best presenters and bring a half dozen or a dozen of them to campus each year. I teach undergraduate
courses so that I can try the innovations they suggest and better help others implement them. I write articles making what we have learned at the Teaching Academy known to other teachers and faculty developers; for example, I have written articles on how to engage students, team teach with a student, direct a team mentoring or peer coaching program for faculty, build a teaching center, develop a database for a center, raise money for a center, and develop programming for a center beyond instructional development, especially programming around the issue of academic writing (See Appendix A).

**Philosophy and Strategies**

I see isolation as a key problem in academia and community as the solution. Faculty members are so tied up in their day-to-day workloads that they rarely collaborate to improve student learning or advance leadership. They don’t have many opportunities to talk to each other about their best ideas. I want to help solve the problem of isolation by cultivating a vibrant community of teachers and leaders. A teaching center is an ideal place to build community because the driving force is collaboration, not competition. We have harnessed this community to help us pursue our highest goals: improving student learning and advancing academic leadership.

The Teaching Academy puts the individual educator at the center of what we do because without supporting individuals, we cannot improve student learning or advance leadership. So we start with the individual, and address their full range of needs, including “deal-breaker” issues like time management, publishing, mentoring, leadership and negotiating the promotion and tenure process. Some of these topics attract audience members who would not otherwise come to the Academy, and some of them come back for teaching workshops. Therefore, addressing these topics is critical to enlarging our community of teachers and leaders.

The Teaching Academy offers about ten collaborative short courses each year and these are the very backbone of our efforts to create community. In these short courses, participants work together to some end over a period of time so short courses are especially effective at breaking down walls and building community. These courses are also effective at
getting faculty to review and revise their own practice. To these ends, I design and teach seven collaborative short courses, most of which are taught each year. I will summarize a few of them for you. In Publish & Flourish, participants triple their writing productivity by writing daily and by giving each other feedback on drafts weekly. In Teaching Portfolios and in Promotion & Tenure Portfolios, participants document their excellence in a convincing and unforgettable way with the help of their teams and their mentors. In Team Mentoring, new faculty who participate join the facilitator (me) in mentoring each other as they work through various career challenges. In the Teaching Scholars course, participants challenge each other to their personal best with peer review of learning objectives, syllabi, rubrics, teaching philosophies, and classroom observations. In Peer Coaching, participants use an established protocol to observe each other’s classes and then exchange feedback (See Appendix B for publicity from short courses).

The Teaching Academy also offers many one-time teaching and leadership workshops per year. These workshops give faculty a chance to get new ideas about teaching and leadership, both from each other and from national experts. Most of these workshops are offered by faculty members on campus. I also invite experts from around the country to present. Each year, I teach a couple of one-time workshops myself (See Appendix C) as well as leading many of the half-dozen “Let’s Talk Teaching” luncheons. In all of these workshops, participants have a lot of time to work together: about 30 percent of the workshop time is spent collaborating and building community.

The Teaching Academy also administers scholarships so that faculty can attend two teaching conferences per year (the Sun Conference for Teaching & Learning and the New Mexico Higher Education Assessment and Retention Conference). To ensure that each trip offers the full benefits of community, we publicize the events as “field trip style” and organize shared transportation and meals. A staff member travels with each contingent of faculty to ensure that a community develops.

The staff members of the Teaching Academy also work with individual educators one-on-one. We publicize that we will observe a class for any NMSU educator. When we attend the classes, we also interview the students after they fill out a short mid-term
evaluation. Each year, we serve about 20 educators with classroom visits. As a result of repeat visits, it is apparent that more faculty members are using interactive methods of teaching, which generate more learning.

Because all the aforementioned programs are expensive, and the operating budget is small, we raise money from participants through donations, which also builds community. Raising money from participants is a way to develop a broad-based sense of ownership in the Academy. I tell participants that the Teaching Academy is like our public radio station—all of our programming is free to participants, but we need help paying for it. Participants contribute to the Teaching Academy to the tune of about $30,000 a year, becoming more invested in the Academy and feeling more a part of our community of teachers and leaders. We also have about $700,000 pledged in future (planned) gifts.

The culmination of our yearly programs is a celebratory gala for all our donors and members. Members are those individuals who earn a membership by participating for more than ten hours that year. When the Academy was founded, faculty said they didn’t mind coming, but they wanted to be rewarded for coming. In response to this request, Jean Conway and I developed a three-tier membership system. Those who participate at least ten hours earn a basic membership as already mentioned; those who participate at least 20 hours earn a sustaining membership; and those who participate at least 40 hours earn a distinguished membership. A few faculty members mention to staff each year that they are going to participate in one or more extra events so that they can earn a certain level of membership. Each year more than 300 faculty, staff and graduate students earn a membership in the Academy and about 120 of them come to our gala to be honored. The President and Provost preside over the gala, which includes an awards ceremony and reception, Champagne & Chocolate. The gala has proven to be a wonderful way to celebrate and develop a community of teachers and leaders.
Effectiveness

The Academy measures our success by the response of the community of teachers: how many come to our 150 workshops (more than 1,000 unique participants per year), how they evaluate the workshops (6.0 on a 7.0 scale), and how often they return for more workshops (more than 300 educators earn a membership each year by participating in more than ten hours of workshops). The year I became director, we tripled the number of events and increased the participation by 6 times from 800 training hours per year to 5,000. The Academy continues to offer a lot of programming and boast high rates of participation. With our partners, including the Online Course Improvement Program (OCIP), Instructional Innovation and Quality (IIQ), and others, the Academy offers 12,000 person-hours of training per year.

To further measure our success, we do tri-annual surveys of the impact of the Teaching Academy. In a 2012 survey with a response rate of 34 percent (n=204), 82 percent said the Teaching Academy broadened their community of peers, 92 percent said our workshops positively impacted their teaching, and 80 percent said that our workshops positively impacted their students’ learning. I offer a sampling of quotations from these studies regarding how the Teaching Academy has broadened their community of peers:

- My community of peers has been broadened in that I have found numerous teaching and research resources outside of my college and department.
- I have started to call/consult with different people on campus, based on a particular issue or challenge that I am confronting.
- I call on others to help when I need it.
- I know people I wouldn’t otherwise have met, one of whom is a co-author on a conference presentation I’m giving at a teaching conference later this month.
- I have met many people outside of my discipline and been able to exchange views and problems. (It turns out we all have similar classroom problems.)
- I identified others in the NMSU who are passionate about teaching; I developed relationships that have resulted in collaborative efforts.
- I have a network of faculty and staff from both DACC and NMSU campuses whom I can discuss and learn from to better my teaching.
- The only people I know on campus who are outside my department are the people I've met through the Teaching Academy/ADVANCE. The Teaching Academy IS my community!
Building community is partly a means to an end. We also celebrate our success when teachers report that the Academy has positively affected student learning. Therefore, I offer a sampling of quotations from our impact study regarding how the Teaching Academy has improved student learning:

- More enthusiasm about the subject matter, better performance on the exams.
- My developmental math pass rates went from about 70% to over 90%.
- I have been seeing better retention rates for each class, as well as a better distribution of grades.
- I’ve also seen a reduction in D, F, W rates, meaning, a higher percentage of my students are passing my rigorous courses.
- My students perform better on a national measure.
- Students seem to be more engaged. Fewer students withdraw and more students complete the course successfully.
- Students are more alert and attentive during lectures, labs and discussions. Their scores have improved as well.
- Students have fewer difficulties in completing their homework, they tend to drop in lower numbers.
- My students are much happier and are able to achieve more on exams and homework. They are also participating far more in the classroom.
- Increased preparation for class. Better grades on national testing.

The NMSU Teaching Academy has also received special national and international recognition. In 2004, we were singled out for praise in the presidential address by Dee Fink at the national faculty development conference. Also in 2004, the Academy was one of two teaching centers selected nationally for a visit from eight Thai delegates interested in founding similar centers in Thailand. In 2005, I was invited to speak about the NMSU Teaching Academy before several hundred educators in Thailand. In 2008 and 2010, I was invited to present on the Teaching Academy and our fund-raising efforts to Montana State University, Eastern New Mexico University the 66 universities in the SUNY system, and the Higher Colleges of Technology in the United Arab Emirates. Also in 2008 and 2010, the Academy was selected by POD Network (Professional Organization Development Network) as a finalist for their Innovation Award. In
2008, we were recognized for our unique membership program; in 2010, for our grassroots fund-raising program. In 2012, the Academy’s fund-raising program was featured in Inside Higher Ed, http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/04/30/faculty-members-donatemoney-teaching-academy. In 2013, engineering education experts, Richard Felder and Rebecca Brent, referred to the NMSU Teaching Academy as the place where “Tara Gray has created the most extensive and widely attended faculty development program we have seen” (Chemical Engineering Education, Winter 2013, 47(1), p. 25). Also in 2013, the Teaching Academy membership program was one of three model programs selected internationally to be featured at an AAC&U summer institute by Dee Fink, former president of POD Network (the national faculty development organization). For more information about the Academy, and to learn more about the kind of center I help lead, see teaching.nmsu.edu.

I have also received some recognition as an individual, which includes eight awards for teaching and service (See Appendix D). I have also been invited to give presentations on faculty development to 5,000 faculty members at teaching centers in 35 states and in Thailand, Mexico, Guatemala, Canada, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. These schools have ranged from community colleges to Harvard. When visiting these schools, I generally give the workshop, Publish & Flourish: Become a Prolific Scholar, but I also get invited to give teaching workshops and workshops on how to found an outstanding teaching center. For more information about the schools I have visited and the impact I have had, see taragray.com.

I offer the attached letters, collected in 2009, to demonstrate my effectiveness as a faculty developer (See Appendix E).

**Improvement Efforts**

I assess my work as a director by listening to myself and others. To this end, I listen to my own inner voice, as well as the voices of national experts, team teachers and participants. I listen to experts both by reading what they write and by participating in about 50 hours of faculty development presented by them at the Academy each year. I seek out these experts for advice and mentoring, both while they are here and after they leave. I also listen carefully to my team teachers. I team teach many workshops and short courses with another teacher, usually Jean Conway, an associate director. I solicit feedback from my team teachers daily, both before and
after each workshop or class session. I solicit feedback from participants by reading their evaluations after each workshop or short course—and typing the changes they suggest into my notes or slides immediately.

As a result of all this feedback, we have developed a membership system for participants and established a Teaching Innovation Award as well as an Outstanding Workshop Award. As mentioned earlier, participants said they didn’t mind coming to the Academy, but they wanted credit for it. From this idea, our membership system was born. We think it is far superior to give membership once a year than to give certificates at the end of each workshop as is done on some campuses. These membership certificates seem to be valued more and are often included in annual evaluations and in promotion and tenure notebooks. Another idea that came from our Teaching Academy Advisory Board was the idea to honor the workshop each year that earns the highest evaluations from participants with the Outstanding Workshop Award. This was an excellent idea and gives one workshop presenter each year an honor for doing an outstanding job. Two more ideas came from former Provosts. One suggested we honor an outstanding classroom teacher each year. After he made that suggestion, we established the Innovation Award for the instructor who puts to best use an innovation from the Teaching Academy. Another suggested that we establish the University Teaching Council, which works to provide a faculty and student voice to foster excellence in teaching and learning on campus.

What remains to be done at the Teaching Academy? One undertaking is to better establish the University Teaching Council (UTC), which I am doing with Jean. We have convened the 20-person Council six times, and made the transition through three presidents and provosts, including interims. We have agreed to develop or refine many teaching rubrics, most of them written by Jean and me, to help faculty better document teaching effectiveness according to the new promotion and tenure guidelines. These rubrics give faculty a more coherent and transparent way to self-assess and to gather peer review of syllabi and classroom visitations as well as online visitations. To see the final rubrics, see teaching.nmsu.edu/Resources/rubrics/index.html.

I am working with Shawn Werner to make two enhancements in ADVANCING Leaders and in the Department Head Academy. For example, we are launching a peer mentoring group for department heads in Fall 2014. The objective is to create a safe and
supportive environment for discussing challenges and to establish a community among
department heads. Most significantly, Shawn proposes, as suggested by former President
Pacheco, to implement two ALP cohorts in the future: one for faculty wishing to advance to
Department Head and one for Department Heads wishing to advance to associate dean (this
would require support from existing deans). Currently Shawn is helping the 2013 ALP cohort
launch a project to examine the efficacy of the ALP program; we are hopeful that this project
will result in recommendations for continued improvements to the ALP program and future
cohorts. As a result, all suggested changes in ALP are tentative because the 2012-2013 ALP
Cohort is studying the program as this year’s project and we will wait to make changes until
we see their findings.

I help Sharon in three modest ways. First, I help Sharon with course design and
publicity as she develops a mentoring program to enlist faculty to review online courses for
quality. Second, I help Sharon with publicity as she leads a new faculty development program
this June called the Blended Learning Boot Camp. Third, I help Sharon identify and recruit
nationally known speakers to speak here on online education.

I partner on fund-raising activities with Mark Hohnstreiter when he serves in the
capacity of Advancement Officer. I attend all recognition events for high-giving donors and
work with Mark on honing our message, which will include revising our case statement this
year. Our objectives include meeting or exceeding the University’s stated goal of 3% increase
in terms of both donor participation and dollars. I will work with Mark on devising some new
techniques to complement our highly successful email solicitations to past and present
members, who represent our major pool of donor prospects. We also seek to solicit two new
planned or major gifts a year, and have identified one such prospect (a Teaching Academy
Benefactor).

I also want to continue to increase the services we provide as a way to expand and
strengthen our community. In the ten years since I have served as director, we have increased
the hours of training from 800 a year to 12,000 a year, an increase of 15 times. We have done
this with help from our partners who teach about distance education. I want to continue to
expand our services to build a bigger, better community of teachers and leaders.
Appendices

Appendix A Bibliography of faculty development publications

Appendix B Publicity for selected short courses:
Publish & Flourish
Team Mentoring for Faculty New to NMSU
Promotion & Tenure Portfolios: Document Your Greatest Accomplishments in Teaching, Scholarship and Service
Peer Coaching for Classroom and Online Educators
Teaching Scholars: Excelling as a Teacher

Appendix C Publicity for selected workshops:
Be All You Can Be—Teach! Twelve Steps to Help Teachers Flourish
Team Teach With a Student
Our Students Can Too Write—and We Can Show Them How!
Ten Ways to Manage Time
A Workshop for Workaholics: Twelve Steps to Stop Work Addiction
Documenting Effective Teaching

Appendix D Listing of teaching and service awards

Appendix E Letters of support as of 2009 from administrators, faculty and colleagues at other institutions

Appendix F Course syllabus for our longest short course: Teaching Scholars: Excelling as a Teacher

\(^{1}\text{New Mexico State University (NMSU). NMSU is a land-grant university with about 20,000 students and 700 full-time faculty members on our main campus in Las Cruces, where the Teaching Academy is located. The Academy serves the main campus, as well as all four of our community campuses. These community campuses vary in distance from the main campus: one is across the street and one is five hours away by car.}\)