

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT CONSULTATION VISION

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Faculty Affairs serves as a trusted collaborator with faculty, shaping an academic culture where faculty voice drives innovation, data-informed decision-making, and continuous improvement. At UAGC, instructional consultation is a valuable form of instructional support, specifically designed with collaboration in mind, for educator practitioners—faculty who both teach and actively apply their expertise in real-world practice. Faculty Affairs' collaborative consultation model not only honors the expertise and experiences of educator practitioners but also helps them integrate those experiences into their teaching practices in ways that support student success. Instructional consultation provides a space for formative development, encouraging reflection on current teaching practices and modeling discourse that leads to practical, student-centered change. It is not evaluative, but rather a confidential and constructive environment co-created by the faculty member and consultant to support instructional growth.

Through instructional support consultation, led by collaborative inquiry and reflection, Faculty Affairs provides a structure that supports actively listening to faculty needs and ensuring they feel valued. Instructional support consultation empowers faculty to critically reflect on and evolve their teaching perspectives and practices, thereby enhancing student learning and aligning with institutional goals.

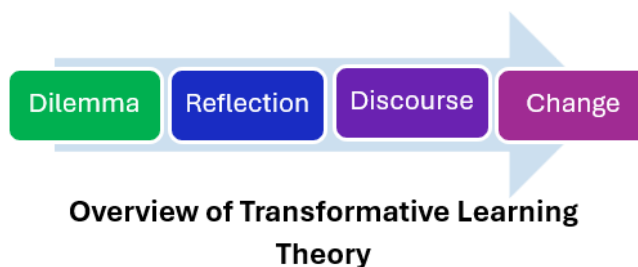
Reflection and Collaborative Inquiry

While there are several consultation models, an intentionally designed collaborative model in which the consultant facilitates change while recognizing the instructor's role as a content expert supports a synergistic partnership that creates a unique instructional support experience. Integral to this collaborative model is honoring the content expertise of UAGC educator practitioners, which creates learning experiences rooted in real-world practice and tailored to students' unique needs, while offering developmental support grounded in diverse teaching practices. The result of the partnership is better than what each individual may produce alone.

Theoretical Framework

Transformative learning theory (TLT) was developed by Mezirow, an adult education theorist whose work focused on explaining how adult learners can change their perspectives through reflection when faced with what he identified as a dilemma. When used as a framework for evolving teaching practices, TLT sparks critical reflection on

assumptions and experiences, leading to a fundamental shift in perspective. It posits that learners, in this case, educator practitioners, who receive new information, also reevaluate their past ideas and



understanding, emphasizing the importance of critical discourse with trusted others as essential to transformation. Grounded in the principles of TLT, instructional support consultation fosters collaboration between peers and faculty by acknowledging that their field expertise is informed by real-world experiences that shape their teaching practices. When instructional consultation is non-evaluative, space is created for open-ended inquiry, perspective-sharing, and meaning-making with a peer or "thought partner."

What Does the Literature Tell Us?

Drawing on his extensive experience as a college math instructor and director of academic support, Huston's (2020) study explored faculty experiences related to teaching and learning professional development. The study yielded key results that, when shaping development, approaches grounded in TLT include influencing the following faculty beliefs, which were identified as dilemmas.

- **Misaligned Expectations:** Faculty entered the profession with assumptions that were challenged by real classroom experiences, prompting self-reflection.
- **Heuristic Nature of Learning to Teach:** Faculty essentially learned to teach through experience rather than formal training.
- **Developing Authenticity and Mastery:** Over time, faculty developed personal teaching philosophies grounded in authenticity.
- **Evolving Perspectives:** Faculty shifted from teacher-centered to more student-centered beliefs as they confronted challenges and reflected on their practices.

Faculty moved away from traditional lecture-driven models toward student-centric approaches, incorporating flexibility, active learning, and differentiated instruction.

Furthermore, Huston (2020) notes that these findings reveal a potentially productive structure for supporting conversations about instructional effectiveness. Using TLT to guide consultation can create an experience that fosters awareness of educator practitioners' beliefs related to teaching and learning and can prompt critical assessment and reconstruction of their roles—from content deliverers to facilitators of learning communities. In alignment with Mezirow's theory, instructional consultation helps frame these challenges as invitations to reexamine beliefs and practices in a supportive context. As beliefs evolved, faculty began trying new instructional strategies—such as increasing interaction, employing collaborative tools, and emphasizing student-centered exercises. This behavioral change is a hallmark of TLT. Dhilia (2016), whose research focuses on online pedagogy, faculty development, and TLT, noted that institutional support is often inadequate, leaving online instructors feeling abandoned and unsupported, and emphasizes the role of peer discourse and mentorship in supporting the evolution of teaching practices. Dhilia (2016) notes that faculty who engaged in professional dialogues or mentoring were more likely to develop new instructional approaches. Overall, Dhilia's (2016) research demonstrates how online teaching environments, framed by TLT, profoundly influence faculty

instructional beliefs and practices, promoting reflective, student-centered, and adaptive teaching approaches.

Creating Productive Partnerships

When engaging in instructional consultation, faculty can expect a supportive and partnership-based experience focused on the evolution of their teaching practices. Each consultation invites faculty to clarify their focus—exploring questions such as, "What aspect of my teaching am I most curious about?" or "What feedback has most influenced my thinking?" Guided by mutual respect and recognition of one another's roles as experts, and through shared inquiry, a space is fostered where faculty and the partner co-construct actionable plans, monitor progress, and celebrate meaningful instructional improvements.

Faculty can expect consultants to utilize relationship-building techniques and communication approaches to listen, build trust, encourage, and emphasize their consultative role as one intended to help faculty achieve their identified goals. From there, the consultant's role is to explain research-based teaching practices and support faculty in selecting a practice that will effectively achieve the identified goal. Finally, the consultant serves as a support to the faculty while the teaching practices are employed. Instructional consultation is designed to cultivate confidence, deepen alignment with pedagogical values, and strengthen student-centered teaching practice.

Shared Governance Collaboration

Faculty Affairs has shared the instructional consultation framework with the Faculty Council and is actively collaborating to launch this evolution of instructional support programming. Please look forward to future communications and the opportunity to participate in instructional consultation.

Questions or ideas? Please contact FacultyAffairs@uagc.edu.

References

- Dhilla, S. J. (2016). *Using Mezirow's transformative learning theory to understand online instructors' construction of the virtual teaching experience*. [Doctoral dissertation, Boston University]. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1801947330>
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