Ep. 075: The Road to a New CTLT

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The Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology is on a journey of change. It's been a long road, and there's still more road ahead, but soon, a lot of behind-the-scenes planning will come to the forefront for the entire Illinois State University campus. Dr. Yojanna Cuenca-Carlino is the Assistant Vice President for Faculty Development, Diversity, and Learning. She gives a preview of what a new CTLT will look like and how these changes will affect faculty, staff, and students.

Transcript

JIM: Hi there. I'm Jim.

YOJANNA: Hi there. I'm Yojanna,

JIM: Let's Talk Teaching Welcome to Let's Talk Teaching a podcast from the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology here at Illinois State University. I'm Jim Gee. Joining me today is the Assistant Vice President for Faculty Development, Diversity, and Learning, Yojanna Cuenca-Carlino. Yojanna, thank you for being on our podcast. You've been involved with CTLT for quite a long time now. But this is the first time we've actually had you on our pokey little show.

YOJANNA: It is. So, good morning. And thank you for having me. I'm excited to be sharing information and being here with the, with the audience.

JIM: And we have a lot of information to share. So this is a little different conversation than we have, typically, usually we're focusing very closely on one teaching topic. Sometimes we'll talk about an event that's coming up like our annual Teaching and Learning Symposium. But we're talking about something a little bigger here, aren't we?

YOJANNA: Yes, we are.

JIM: So, do you want to kind of give us just a little bit of a preview of what we want to explore today.

YOJANNA: So, we are in the process of actually developing a comprehensive professional development center for the supportive faculty, right? We want to make sure that, that we are supporting faculty and instructors in a more holistic way, when we really think about faculty or life in academia really, it does not happen is not only about teaching, right? It also involves who you are as a person, and you know, your interactions with others, your leadership, but also how do you develop as a scholar, and how that impacts and then the technology and many there are many overlapping, right, with your teaching your scholarship. So that is what we are trying to do create a professional development hub that is going to provide the support in all those areas of academic life.

JIM: And, you know, as we were getting ready for this this morning, I was I was thinking about the evolution of what got has to where CTLT is now. CTLT has been around for about 16 years, I think.

YOJANNA: Absolutely.

JIM: And before that, it was the combination of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching, and another unit, which did more technology support for instructors. And back then it was you know, the our not everyone was using a learning management system, ReggieNet on our campus. Well, and it's actually predated Reggie into if I remember correctly, and it was just kind of a natural evolution at that point that those two units would come together. And so now I feel like we're talking about another natural evolution. But it's also one that we have a lot of data that informs it. So we'll we'll talk about that more in a second. Before we get into that, one of the key phrases that we have been using more and more over the last couple years at CTLT. And as we work with faculty and with those who support faculty with with staffing and, and graduate teaching assistants and all of those folks. One of the phrases we've we've come to use more and more is this phrase scholarly teaching? What's the difference between scholarly teaching and vanilla run of the mill teacher?

YOJANNA: Well, scholarly teaching, it's key to to student success, right? Like there are a lot of evidence based practices, there's a lot of decades of research about what practices are effective for helping support students in the classroom. You know, active engagement assessment practices, different ways in which instructors can, you know, deliver instruction can assess instructions to support students. So it's basically all those practices that are deeply rooted in evidence, right, that will support the success of all students and especially students from also underrepresented backgrounds, right. So that is something that we aspire to continue to do even more, you know, in the center, not only helping faculty learn about these practices, apply these practices, but for those who are interested in actually studying their own learning practices, helping them do that, right through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning I mean, we have a lot of, of information out there about why these practices are important for the support of students.

JIM: And I want to key in on one word that you said there in that which was that apply part of it because because if people, anyone who really thought about their their teaching maybe came to CTLT. Did one of our workshops or on their own investigated a better way of doing what they're doing. They've they've kind of hit that first part but it's the it's the reflecting on it and applying it and changing what you're doing yourself. I think that that is really exciting about this idea of a scholarly teacher.

YOJANNA: Absolutely. And that you know, I am a firm believer that that reflection it's critical for for instructors, right like knowing what works, and then also reflect On on the changes that they need to make that is actually part of being a forward thinking faculty writer that is really paying attention to what is working in the classroom and kind of trying different things, you know, that have been shown that work, you know, from the literature.

JIM: Yeah. And I should also mention for those listening in for those both on campus and we have a lot of listeners off campus, who are not part of the immediate ISU family. When we say faculty, we're, most of the time we're talking about not just tenured or tenure line faculty, not just non tenure track faculty, but anyone who has instructional responsibilities, which includes a you know, more than 400 graduate student.

YOJANNA: Absolutely. Yes, exactly. And, you know, let's actually use the term instructor that probably will be more inclusive of all the people that we want to make sure right, that are part of the center.

JIM: Yeah, well, and that's, that's something that we've talked about a lot behind the scenes over the years and stuff like that, we would love to change the definition, a little bit, more of faculty to be more inclusive, we can use the word faculty. A lot. But yeah, we're talking about instructors and and support staff who do that, too. So, one thing we probably don't need to get into today is going into too deep of the behind the scenes, nuts and bolts of how a department is transformed in a university environment. Needless to say, it's something that takes a lot of work. It takes a lot of time. We've been talking about this. In some ways, it's hard to talk about this now for me, because we've been talking about this behind the scenes store, before the pandemic began.

YOJANNA: Oh, yeah, for two years. Yeah.

JIM: So let's instead talk a little bit about some of the information that is in the data that's informing this change. And and that then you can give us a picture of what this change is actually going to look like.

YOJANNA: Sure, absolutely. Well, these really, these prices really started back in 2019. When we started, we did a faculty, staff, and students survey as well. And some focus groups back in 2019. Some faculty, some instructors, and faculty might have remembered, you know, taking that survey and that survey was really aimed to understanding how to better support faculty to promote student success among all of ISU students. And at that time, we also ask information about their faculty professional development needs, and all their areas that they would need support. So this is where we ask about information about how else can we support you in scholarship, or what other type of support where you need to be successful here at ISU so that we gather a lot of information, we got a really pretty good response rate that back then in FY 2019. And then that prompted to do faculty success professional development retreat, shortly after we had like about probably 60 to 70 different stakeholders across the university, including faculty, administrators, people in different units. And we spend an entire day just talking about how to best support graduate students who have teaching responsibilities, non-tenure track faculty, faculty at all levels, and what are the things that we have? How can we can capitalize on the strengths that we have, because we have many good strengths, you know, and a lot of support for faculty. But one of the things that we found is that sometimes we were a little siloed, with needed to be more connected and kind of build and support each other. So fast forward. I also spend some time working with other colleagues in the Provost Office, for example, the Associate Vice President for Research and we started talking with, you know, college research coordinators and talked about what are the needs for faculty and the things that they were doing. We, here at CTLT, we had different retreats back then to, you know, to just meet as a team and talk about, we have been doing all these things for, you know, like you said, 13 years, right, and now looking at the data that we have collected, what are the things that we need to do, you know, moving forward, and also to think about it with equity, diversity and inclusion mindset, right, because that's part of that. At that same time, some of you might remember we developed the Framework for Inclusive Teaching Excellence. And that is when then we use that framework to kind of move and align all the professional development from CTLT to the new framework. So all those things were happening in parallel, as we were kind of moving forward.

JIM: And I should mention too, we'll link to on our show page for this episode, we'll link to the our page that describes the different dimensions of that framework. It's actually pretty cool because it's a good way, not only to, for people to have a little bit more agency and choosing what sort of professional development they want to do, but it's, it's a good way to kind of browse the different perspectives that you can bring to your own teaching and your own academic life.

YOJANNA: Absolutely. And it's based on scholarly teaching. Right, so So just going back to where we started The framework for Inclusive teaching excellence was developed based on all the data that I mentioned that we gather, but also on an, you know, excellent review of the literature. And that's how the the framework was born. So we could just have the different dimensions that really affect learning but also serve as an opportunity arises as a tool for self reflection for faculty and instructors as well. Right? In terms of the things that what are your strengths as an instructor, and where are the things that you might not necessarily know a lot, right that you want to look for.

JIM: So it's part of this conversation, too, we should probably point out. And you kind of alluded to this that that it wasn't happening in a vacuum. In other words, you were taking this information you were getting, and there were other outside of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, there are other professional development projects that had started on campus, the growth,

YOJANNA: Change team.

JIM: Growth change team, and the university faculty mentoring

YOJANNA: Correct.

JIM: Were things and I'm sure we'll get to that. But these are all going to kind of come in as part of our bigger...

YOJANNA: Yes, all of those were projects that I started as part of it. But now we envision these, all of these projects to now be centralized right in one place. So just to keep talking about the data that we gather. So, the other piece that we did as a center, we look at other institutions, right, we collaboratively look at about 18 different institutions out there and wanted to see what they were doing. And many of we noticed that many of those institutions were actually moving also towards a more comprehensive, holistic center, right, providing professional development support in kind of different areas. So taking into consideration, you know, the data that we collected from the faculty, which by the way, we actually administer the survey again in 2020, this time into his in 20, we did a

more specific information about other areas like leadership, mentoring, tenure and promotion for for those who you know, are in that process. And we collect that more and more information about these changes. So that were the initial steps. But also last year, as part of Provost Tarhule asked many of us in the Provost Office to lead different workgroups with different topics, with the post pandemic in mind, landscape, and also really thinking about equity, diversity and inclusion as we kind of move forward. So one of the groups that I was leading was faculty success. So as part of that process, I also had a committee, I think we're about 20 different people in that committee all around the university, faculty administrators in different positions. And we spent an entire five months just going and looking into what does, how can we support faculty in different ways. So we explore again, faculty, as a person as it has to do with career progression and mentoring leadership, we explore teaching, and why do we need to support instructors to then support students in the classroom. And then the other big piece that we learned after the pandemic was the importance of quality online learning. So that was another component of it. And then CTLT, and you know, will continue, we continue working with some subgroups, for those for that group for that work, and we develop a white paper that is actually available for everyone on campus to look in terms of their recommendations out of that group. That's where we recommend that the COACHE, survey the faculty job satisfaction survey that we're going to implement. And the recommendation for that workgroup to then was to develop the plans for professional development hub that will be more centralized. And that's where we are right now.

JIM: That's where we are right now. So that's the journey.

YOJANNA: That is the journey a bit long, but we have been making sure that we take all the steps and all that data as

JIM: Well, and the journey isn't complete, either. There are still questions that we have that we're going to answer, there's still some, some pieces that need to kind of be fitted together. But the other exciting thing is, as part of this process, we're taking a new look at how we're dividing the attention of not only the staff at CTLT, but also sort of our mission, you know, Center for Teaching, Learning, okay, and Technology. I think that we're actually adding some some people to the staff that are going to help us kind of better handle all those aspects, even though the unit itself may not be called that eventually,

YOJANNA: Yes, we are actually going to change the name. That's one of the things that we are thinking so he really reflect these new changes and these new vision of an integrated center. But yes, so one of the big changes that we're going to make is we are actually Creating a scholarly teaching unit and merge with the Cross Endowed Chair for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. And what these would do is they would allow us to, again, emphasize that continuum for faculty to learn about evidence based practices to apply those evidence based practices. But for those who are interested in actually studying, you know, their evidence or their practices, scholarly teaching in their classroom, then have the opportunity to learn more about Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Right. So that is one of the the changes. For the longest time CTLT has supported professional online learning with everything that had to do. And

obviously, during the pandemic, the center was key in supporting, you know, with a lot of faculty mentors, the that switch, right right to, to online learning. So one of the things that we realize was that we needed a dedicated person to really be helping right the university to develop online learning programs. So not only support for faculty, but also support for programs who want to develop new online programs as well. So that is another change. So we are actually hiring a new director for online education that will be housed in, you know, the center. So that it's the expectation is that this director will very work very closely with the scholarly teaching and cross Endowed Chair, because they're still scholarly teaching in all environments, right, not only in face to face, but also in online, what are those quality and best practices?

JIM: Right. And and I think that's an important thing to keep in mind. Or it's important for folks who are listening to understand that we have kept in mind that yes, there are different duties and different things that they're going to have to these two directors and the folks that work with them are going to have to do but for someone coming into for support, to CTLT, whether you're approaching it from the I need to teach this online course next semester, how do I prepare for that, or something maybe more traditionally, pedagogically oriented, you're still going to have access to all the resources, as we said, before we started recording, scholarly teaching isn't exclusive to face to face, to face to face environments, there's scholarly teaching is very much a part of online education. And so I think one thing to two people can be assured of is that the most of the services, almost all of the services that they've always gotten from CTLT, will still be there. And in fact, most of us, even though some of my colleagues in this hallway may be reporting to a different director than I will be, for example, we're still all part of the same unit, we're still going to be talking to each other all the time,

YOJANNA: Yes, then it's we the intent is to continue to have an integrated unit, you know, for for people outside, but also an integrated unit within right. It's, that's the whole the whole idea in here. So those are the big changes as of now. But we are also are in the process of them paying attention to then the other aspect of, you know, instructors and faculty development in the sense of career progression, leadership, development, mentoring, you know, all those are key pieces that are going to help support that. And one of the things that I think we will help us a lot would be the results of the COCHE faculty survey that survey is going to go live in. It's going to be launched in February. But we're going to get a lot of specific data about how you know how faculty are feeling in different areas supported, right. So that information would help us even further develop all that other components of and these, the support that we expect to provide related to leadership and scholarship would be in collaboration with the Office of Research, right? This is a partnership with them. So we are kind of thinking about what will be the best way, they already offer a lot of things. So maybe our center will be a way in which you're helping them promote, right what what they do or maybe come up with different new, you know, programming to help them support

JIM:	When we've talked about this change. You and I especially we've talked about this idea of having a front door. And at some point, we're going to have a new physical front door. We're not sure the timeline for that yet. We're still in our temporary home and Williams Hall as we record this. But we're also talking about having a digital front door. So we'll have a new website experience and whatnot. But I think what you just illustrated really, when we talk about a hub we're talking about, there may be some things that you can access through that hub that are generated by the staff that are working at CTLT and have always worked at CTLT. But as you said, we may be helping you find what you need with other units as well or we may be this where they're where their events are listed or something like that. There are all sorts of practical and kind of behind the scenes and boring ways that that can happen. But the main thing is that we want to try to To make it as easy as possible for people to not only find what they're looking for, but also figure out what they might want to be looking for.
YOJANNA:	Absolutely. And, you know, we our intent is to have things available for people at all levels of their careers, right. Like we have a lot of already programming specifically for graduate teaching assistants. You know, we also have programming for early career faculty. And then we will think about what other things are available for mid career faculty or faculty who, you know, have been here for a long time. So our intent is that there there's, there is programming and support for people at all stages of their careers.
JIM:	So, Johanna, that sounds great. As I kind of jokingly alluded to before, it's kind of the the glacial pace of change on a university campus, but things are actually starting to move faster. Now. What can we tell folks about our timetable for this change happening?
YOJANNA:	Yes, so we actually posted the two positions. So we are currently searching for the Scholarly Teaching Director, Cross Endowed Chair, that position is open, and it's it's been promoted, and in different outlets, that hire will hope this, we hope that this person starts July 1. In the same the same way, the Director of Online Education has also been posted. And we have that out there in different outlets. And the goal is, again, the same, the same timetable, June July, would hope that we have the director of online education in place. So those are the two things and that will continue to work behind the scenes, all the other pieces that I just talked about,
JIM:	Right.
YOJANNA:	And we hope that probably by fall, we'll have a more formalized place in terms of how, you know, we're going to start working on the career advancement, which we are kind of in a way already doing right have the, as you mentioned, the university faculty mentoring network that has been this is for faculty within the first three years. And we have the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, that's a membership that we have as an institution, we have some of those things already in place. But we want to formalize that kind of moving forward.

JIM: So it sounds like what people should expect is that we're not flipping a switch, and suddenly, everything is boom transformed. The next the next moment. These have been gradual things that have been building up. And at some point, we'll have a grand opening, and we will have a new name, and we'll have a new space and all of that other stuff. But in the meantime, people can still rely on us for all of this stuff that we've been talking about today.

YOJANNA: Absolutely. Absolutely. That the great staff at CTLT will continue to be here to support, you know, all the instructors as they kind of move forward and you know, started the spring semester and beyond.

JIM: All right, Yojanna, thank you so much.

YOJANNA: Thank you, Jim was great.

JIM: And that's all the time we have for this episode of Let's Talk Teaching. Find out more about some of the changes that will be coming to the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology and more importantly about the services and support that we offer right now go to our website CTLT.IllinoisState.edu for Dr. Yojanna Cuenca-Carlino for all of my colleagues here at CTLT until we talk again, happy teaching.