



PROVIDING TOOLS FOR TEACHER-SCHOLARS

Kina Mallard believes that faculty development is a health issue.

“Health for anybody is mental, emotional and spiritual,” she said. “People want meaningful work, and they want to make sure they do meaningful work well. Specifically at Union, faculty development helps faculty be the best teachers, the best scholars, the best role models and mentors to students, as well as to provide opportunities for them to grow spiritually.”

Mallard believes that, with higher education under attack at many levels, faculty are asked to do more with less. That makes it even more important to

make sure they have the tools they need in the classroom.

“Taking care of faculty and making sure they have the tools needed to be successful is the only way for a university to be successful,” she said. “Faculty come as experts in their content area, but they don’t always have teaching skills. They don’t always understand university culture, and they’re usually surprised by the workload. They struggle with how to balance everything, especially in the first three years. A faculty development program can assist them with everything they need to be successful at an institution.”

She also sees faculty development as a retention tool.

“The program specifically designed at Union is designed to meet the holistic needs of the person,” she said. “We want to hire the best, but we also want to retain the best.”

Mallard said someone once told her good was the enemy of best.

“Through the faculty development program at Union, we work alongside the faculty moving from good to best,” she said. “The motto of the Center for Faculty Development is ‘together toward excellence.’ One of Union’s core values is Excellence Driven, and faculty develop-

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ment holds excellence in teaching and scholarship as the ideal always before us.”

Union’s center began in 1998, with Mallard as director. A professor of communication arts and chair of the department of communication arts, she holds a B.S. from Middle Tennessee State University and a M.A. and a Ph.D. from the University of Tennessee.

“My interest grew out of a combination of my communications and training background and my administrative work as department chair,” she said. “I became aware of other campuses that had faculty development centers and programs and saw a need at Union. Drs. Dockery and Sanderson shared this vision with me and the Center for Faculty Development grew out of this shared vision.”

She sees the center offering assistance in four areas: teaching excellence, scholarship development, understanding the cultural dynamics of Union’s environment and the integration of faith into the classroom.

“There is a difference between a teacher and professor at college level who is alive in their discipline and one who is not,” Mallard said. “I don’t mean alive in that they keep up to date and read journals, but that they have a responsibility to give back to our field. Scholarship is critical analysis, the integration of various sources, the discovery of new ways to think about their discipline and how to teach their discipline. So it’s critical. Higher education is about faculty teacher scholars.”

She also believes that faculty must find their way in an institution and discover ways to make a unique contribution.

While all roles are important, she says most faculty will only stand out in one.

“Each faculty member works out of

the strengths they have been given by God, the skills acquired through graduate work and the passion they have for content,” she said. “Part of faculty development helps faculty discover where they can make a difference at Union.”

In addition to putting together new workshops for veteran faculty, the center developed an orientation program for new faculty called Fresh Start, which runs through the fall semester of a faculty member’s first year. A mentoring program begins in the spring semester in which the new faculty member is paired with a veteran.

“The mentoring program gives new faculty someone they can trust and ask questions,” she said. “We have a structured format, because we want good results. We look for mentors who are positive about the university, who understand the climate, who have been here long enough to understand Union and who are good teacher scholars and good role models.”

Another important aspect of the center’s work is helping faculty integrate faith and learning in the classroom. Mallard sees a Christian university as a natural place to do that.

“As Christians, if we don’t understand the issues in our discipline and try to deal with them, then we’re allowing others to deal with them for us,” she said. “Jesus was a radical thinker who brought in new ideas that hadn’t been thought of before, and he challenged the thinking. Sometimes there’s a misunderstanding that the integration of faith and learning is praying before class, for giving your testimony, but that’s actually separation of faith and learning. Really what we’re after is weaving Christian thought throughout the class content. Our classes should be different than a

class you would take at a public university, because we’re challenging students to think of everything through a Christian perspective. That’s a freedom we have that a public university doesn’t have. The goal is not to come out with the answers but to at least ask the right questions.”

Mallard talked recently with an academic vice president from a sister school who wanted to get his faculty to integrate faith and learning more.

“I just said it’s a very slow process, and it’s a threatening process,” she said. “You need a strong leader who’s willing to articulate but who’s also willing to give grace. I think Dr. Dockery has really been a strong leader who could stand before the faculty and share what integration of faith is and make it so clear. At the same time, he’s been able to do that without a heavy hand, without saying ‘we will do this in every class, and we will do it this way,’ because there isn’t one way to do it.”

Mallard currently is working with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities to develop a virtual faculty development center for their member schools. Working with a board of directors, she will solicit best practices from faculty and put them up on the CCCU website as resource tools.

“I’ll do consulting and speak on other campuses on behalf of the CCCU,” she said. “I’ll also help plan a national faculty development conference.”

Her passion for faculty development centers on her belief that the teacher is the most important part of a university.

“Faculty, as well as students, must be life-long learners,” she said. “When the professor brings his or her mind, spirit and passion for their students into the classroom, the student, the faculty and the university as a whole benefits.” 