Overview
This report is submitted as part of the Institute for Faculty Development’s (IFD) 5-year review. To gather evidence for the report, I studied the IFD’s self-study report, reviewed national practices, and visited campus on March 30-31, where I interviewed over 50 faculty and administrators, including new faculty, faculty fellows, adjunct faculty, and deans.

History
The IFD has been in existence since 2005, following a two-year gap after the disbanding of the prior Institute for the Study of College Teaching (1999-2003). Although there are many models for providing faculty development support at universities, including charging a committee or individual faculty member with the responsibility, having a centralized teaching and learning center with dedicated staff—like the IFD—is the most common configuration (Sorcinelli, et al, 2006, pp. 37-38).

Since the founding of IFD in 2005, the university has experienced considerable growth in the numbers of both students and faculty. During that time, the IFD has also expanded its services and entered into new areas in response to faculty needs, institutional initiatives, and the individual strengths and interests of the three successive IFD directors. As one administrator said to me, IFD has morphed into something much bigger with the same number of people.”

With ten years and three directors in its current iteration, the IFD appears to now be institutionalized as part of the Stockton culture. Although some expressed concerns that with changes in upper administration the IFD could once again be disbanded as it was in 2003, faculty for the most part seemed to agree with one person’s statement that “the Institute has been pretty well supported by administration and well perceived by faculty.”

The IFD also seems to be closely aligned with the university’s prioritization of teaching, or the “primacy of teaching” (Reaching 40). As one faculty member expressed it, “I see it as integral to who we are and maintaining who we are moving forward.”
The questions at this point in its history, and the ones addressed in this report are

- What has been the impact of the IFD in its first 10 years?
- How can it best be sustained and grow to meet the needs of the future?

**Impact**
The IFD’s mission provides a useful framework for assessing the impact of the Institute:

The mission of the IFD is to serve as a resource to support effective pedagogy and productive scholarship for all faculty members. The IFD works with faculty to develop services and resources to assist them in the pursuit of their goals for excellence in teaching, research, and service. (IFD Self Study)

How well does IFD support effective pedagogy and productive scholarship? How well does it assist faculty in pursuing excellence in teaching?

The IFD keeps records of event evaluations. Those included as appendices in the IFD Self Study indicate that most participants find these workshops to be well presented and useful. These satisfaction surveys provide good evidence of the professionalism of the IFD’s programming, but my interviews and focus groups indicate that the impact of the IFD’s work is much greater than can be captured in such short, immediate surveys.

Perhaps the strongest theme I heard in all constituent groups was that the IFD is central to creating a community around teaching at Stockton. Similarly, many faculty members credit the IFD with helping them be successful as teachers and scholars (thus meeting the goal set out in the IFD mission).

**New Faculty**
The role of the IFD in building community and faculty success is very evident in its work with new faculty. This focus of programming was a large part of the IFD’s original mission and even though the Institute has branched out into other areas and other constituents, it still remains a central part of the IFD’s work. Through the New Faculty Orientation, the fall semester new faculty workshops, and consultation and workshops on file construction, the IFD provides a range of services to help new faculty join the Stockton community and succeed.

One striking impact of this programming has been the creation of interdisciplinary cohorts of new faculty who not only learn from the IFD but also support each other professionally and socially. In the words of one new faculty member, “I have never worked anywhere where I’ve felt so supported as a faculty member... It felt like Stockton wanted us to be successful and provided tools to make that happen.” Another new faculty member went even further and attributed part of the decision to come to Stockton to the community offered by IFD:

Knowing that this program existed when I was deciding on job offers made a big difference in making my decision. For new faculty moving to this area not knowing anyone, it’s helpful
not just for finding stuff. There are other people you make a point of seeing, that are outside of program. Having that builds a sense of community right from beginning and sets up staff for success.

The importance of this community is even more evident when seen from the perspective of those who didn’t have it. The deans mentioned to me that faculty who came during the 2-year hiatus between ISCT and IFD felt lost and had more difficulty getting through to tenure. I later heard from one faculty member who fell in this group. After describing the isolation of her first years and the feeling that she had been “left on my own,” she summed it up simply by saying, “It could make you leave.” Faculty retention is vital to an institution, and it seems that the IFD is helping the university recruit and retain faculty.

It was clear that a big part of the support wasn’t just explicit information on teaching practice, but also clarification and connections for much of the “hidden curriculum” of being a faculty member at Stockton. Numerous faculty members pointed out how the IFD Director was able to give them insight on things such as the culture of the university, how evaluations work, and the role of the union. IFD programming also helped them better understand the university’s General Studies program and the Essential Learning Outcomes.

Pre-tenure faculty also benefit greatly from the work IFD does in helping them with file creation. The deans stated that they could see a difference in the files of those who worked with Dr. Reynolds and those who didn’t. And although one person expressed concern that focus on file construction may emphasize teaching to get tenure over teaching well for the sake of teaching well, others acknowledged that any review process can be mysterious to the uninitiated and it is to their advantage to understand it better. I would also add that the work with pre-tenure faculty is complemented by the IFD’s innovative program of summer institutes that help post-tenure faculty become better peer reviewers. This holistic approach to faculty evaluation is a good model for other institutions.

Simply put, as one dean said, “the impact for the new faculty has been unquestionably good.”

Adjunct Faculty

Another group who has benefitted from the IFD is the adjunct faculty. Support for adjunct faculty is obviously a pressing issue nationwide, and is perhaps even more important at an institution like Stockton that employs a significant number of adjunct and part-time faculty. In speaking with several different adjunct faculty members, I was impressed by how enthusiastically they described the positive impact that the IFD has had on their experience.

Adjunct faculty appreciated that they were invited to be part of professional development opportunities and could receive stipends for participating in summer institutes. Because they come to Stockton with a range of teaching experience, some felt the need for more instruction on pedagogy, and others asked for more adjunct-specific programming. In general, however, those I spoke with were extremely satisfied, and that they saw the IFD as a major contributor in the message Stockton sends out to its adjuncts that adjunct faculty are faculty, and hence
members of the community. The importance of this message cannot be overstated in a time when many adjunct faculty feel like disposable and exploited interlopers on campus.

Senior Faculty
While the initial focus of the IFD was on new faculty, over the years programming has grown to support senior faculty as well through such things as teaching circles, summer institutes, and the work of Faculty Fellows. The senior faculty I spoke with welcomed this expansion, and the deans suggest that this would be a worthwhile direction for future growth.

In speaking of the impact of IFD programming, senior faculty also highlighted the importance of the IFD in creating community across the college. As one said, “It’s less common for us to talk to us any more now that campus has grown. IFD becomes the node for making connections.” They did express concern, however, that the heavy schedule of the university was making it harder to find common times to meet and wished there were time built into the schedule for faculty development and mentoring.

Likewise, while new faculty pointed to the IFD as helping them stay at Stockton, senior faculty described how working with the IFD reinvigorated them, whether it was by helping them align courses to ELOs and critical thinking goals, or getting the chance to mentor other faculty, or exploring topics of interest such as women in academia. One said of a summer institute, “It changed my life.” They appreciated that IFD services have expanded to respond to and collaborate current institutional initiatives (e.g., critical thinking). They also expressed interest in programming on additional topics, such as diversity, although there was some concern about mission creep and overwork of the center.

Finally, while some administrators worried that senior faculty may view the IFD as only for beginning teachers, and that that might come with a certain amount of stigma, the senior faculty members I spoke with disagreed and said, “There will always be some [senior] people interested. We are teachers.”

Summary of Impact
In my discussions with over 50 constituents, there was practically unanimous agreement that the programming of the IFD has been effective, necessary, and helpful both to individual faculty but also to furthering and supporting the mission and priorities of the university. According to one faculty member, “The culture of Stockton is very classroom rich, connected to student culture, and IFD brings out some of the best of that and reinforces that.”

My one recommendation in this area is that the IFD explore ways to capture evidence of this impact more regularly than is currently done. Some of the action items for assessment proposed in the Self Study, such as focus groups and retrospective surveys, would be helpful.

I would also encourage the IFD to find ways to document the impact of individual work with faculty on things like file construction. Such work is usually very time consuming and often
somewhat invisible when it comes to assessment even though it is also often the work that can have the deepest impact. Confidentiality is obviously a concern and should be guarded carefully, but assessment can be done without reporting individual names. In my discussions I was impressed that a) this work takes up a considerable amount of the director’s time and b) those on both sides of the table agreed that the work had a positive impact. Ongoing evidence of the latter is important for justifying the former, and for giving the most complete picture possible of the work of the IFD.

**Growth and Sustainability**

Perhaps because there was such overwhelming agreement about the value of the IFD in the academic life of Stockton, there was also a thread of concern about how to ensure that the IFD can continue to function effectively and to meet the growing needs of the university.

Some of this concern is a product of the growth that has already occurred, both the growth in the numbers of faculty and the expansion of areas of programming. A number of people mentioned that the IFD has moved beyond its original charge, and while that expansion was lauded, there was also worry that it might exhaust the available resources and personnel. I heard concern about “mission creep” from both administrators and faculty. One person also expressed that too much would be expected of the IFD and that, for example, the IFD providing orientation for new faculty would “be an out” for programs and others not to also provide training and support. And while many found it useful that the IFD was connecting with other initiatives (e.g., eLearning, ELOs, critical thinking), another person described that the “problem for every successful program is that it gets looked to to solve all problems.”

However, the main concerns with sustainability clearly focused on the questions of resources and staffing, so my focus in this section is to examine the structure of the IFD.

**Location**

Looking at “location” in the most concrete way, I heard positive comments on the physical space of the IFD. Faculty liked that it is in a central location on campus near the faculty lounge. The staff of the Institute seemed happy with the space provided, although I did note that there is only one common space where both the director and the support person work, with no private office and no room for expansion.

Equally important, however, is the organizational “location” of the IFD. Centralized faculty development centers are frequently in a liminal space between administration and faculty, and can thus be both a connection and a buffer between them. The IFD appears to function in this way. Like many centers, it reports to Academic Affairs, but is also seen as autonomous and “a safe haven.” One faculty member said it was “not threatening because it’s not part of the personnel process,” whereas administrators described it as an important contributor toward furthering institutional initiatives. It was apparent that the IFD has thus far been successful at negotiating this space between administration and faculty, and that maintaining this position is important.
Leadership
The IFD has had three directors since 2005, and I heard only positive comments about the abilities and contributions of all three. As one dean stated, “We’ve been fortunate in having good directors. Each successive director builds on their predecessors.” Others, however, expressed concern that good leadership of the IFD was too dependent on “luck.”

Sometimes positions and offices are successful because of the personalities running them. I don’t know that the position [of director] and the way it functions, separate from the people who have been it, is set up to be functional. We need to make sure it works even if we’re not so lucky to get good people.

Similarly, there was some concern that there may not always be appropriate people in the pipeline to take over the position and there were questions about what would happen if the pool of appropriate candidates dried up. Faculty development work demands a certain set of skills, experience, knowledge, and dispositions that not all faculty, nor even all good teachers, have.

This question of succession is just one part of the larger question of how the director position has been defined. There are many models for leadership in faculty development centers. The director can be a full-time faculty member or a professional educational developer with an administrative staff position (and often with a faculty or adjunct appointment) and the position can be permanent or fixed term (Lee, 2010, p. 24). No single model is “best,” and much depends upon the culture and structure of the institution.

At Stockton, the director has been a full-time faculty member serving a temporary (and renewable) 3-year term. This structure has many benefits as well as many challenges. As a strength, this means the director is recognized by faculty as a peer, someone who personally knows what it means to be faculty at Stockton, who has taught there, gone through tenure, understands union policies, etc. From everything I heard from faculty, this has been an important feature of the position, and what I heard indicated that turning the position into an administrative appointment would not work as well within the culture of Stockton. Faculty all seemed to agree that the director should be a faculty member and a member of the union (the presence of a faculty union was very important in this discussion, and differentiates Stockton from some other institutions). Despite this agreement, however, I should note that one person did wonder if Stockton had become “over-dependent” on having faculty take on administrative duties like this.

The three-year term also has some benefits. Several people pointed out that each person has brought new vision and strengths to the position and that the IFD has benefited from this succession. However, there were many questions about the term as well. Although the previous directors have built on each other’s work smoothly, there is the danger of a lack of consistency with frequent turnover. Some worried that it was too short and that a director was just hitting his stride when it was time to finish. But others worried that it could be too long,
taking the director out of the classroom for three years. It was noted that if the director wanted to eventually move into an administrative position, the position could be beneficial, but for those going back to the faculty it could mean a difficult transition back to teaching and back into the conversation of scholarship. There was concern that this could possibly hurt someone’s progress toward promotion to full professor. It was also noted that the previous director still does some IFD type work with faculty, which takes her time. On the positive side, she commented on how her experience as director also gave her a better and broader view of the mission of the university and has been a benefit to her understanding of teaching and learning.

From the perspective of the director’s home program, the current model means basically being without a faculty member for three years. Even though the directors still try to attend meetings, it was generally agreed that they weren’t a member of the program in the same way they would be otherwise. This seemed especially pressing when the director came from a small program. For example, even though the director is not supposed to teach while in the position, the current director has been asked to.

One suggestion that was made by several different people was to look toward a model with overlapping terms for directors. This would allow the directors to learn from each other and perhaps to teach occasionally and stay involved with their programs. There were different thoughts on exactly how this would work—how many years, when and how much directors would teach, etc.,—but the model seemed to be worth exploring. I would also caution, however, that while this may seem to be a low-cost way to expand staff (by simply reapportioning course releases), one should be careful of expecting a director to be able to teach too much and realistic about how much they could teach and still be effective running the Institute. This model might also lead to a lack of clarity about leadership.

Alternately, several people—both administrators and faculty—suggested that perhaps it was time to create an assistant or associate director position. There was much concern that the current job is too much for one person. As one faculty member said, “We want more faculty development. But don’t want to burn people out.” Although people emphasized that the directors have never refused or neglected to do something because they were too busy, there was still a sense that the position had outgrown one person and that what was needed was “two Bills.”

One possibility, following a common model, would be to have an associate director with a faculty development background who would be a permanent staff member of the unit (Lee, 2010). That model would provide consistency between directors and could manage some of the regularly occurring programs and workshops. Another possibility would be to grow one of the faculty fellow positions into more of an associate director position. Both those models, as well as the co-director model discussed previously, have benefits and drawback and would involve different levels of investment.

Finally, I will also add that another support for the director would be greater connections to other faculty developers through national organizations like the POD Network in Higher
Education. POD offers an Institute for New Faculty Developers every other summer, and it would be greatly beneficial for the incoming director to participate. Membership in POD and attendance of the conference can also help support a director in her work. There is no need for each director in Stockton to have to work in isolation and to learn the ropes on his own. Faculty development work can be a fairly isolated job on many campuses, so the support of a professional network is invaluable.

**Other staff**
In addition to the question of an additional co-director or assistant director, several people wondered if there was need for additional or upgraded support staff. For example, some wondered if student workers would be able to do some of the more basic clerical tasks of the office, or if an assistant director might be able to take over some of the more administrative tasks the director currently does.

I also wondered whether the current support staff position accurately reflects the level of work being done. In my experience, in an office with a single person providing clerical support, that person is often asked to do a greater variety of work, often at higher levels than their job description, than someone in a unit with multiple staff members. While the IFD Assistant expressed commitment to the mission of the IFD and has only positive things to say about the directors she’s worked under, I have to ask the question if she were to leave, could the university find someone with the necessary skills and experience if they hired under the current job title. If there is a larger strategic conversation about staffing of the office, I would encourage it to include this position’s job description to see how it might best contribute to the functioning of the office.

**Summary of Growth and Sustainability**
The IFD has already survived in its current structure for ten years and during that time has managed growth and change. It has responded to changes in the university (e.g., moving its assessment function to a new position within Academic Affairs). This history is a sign of the unit’s stability and adaptability. It also appears to have become a solid and, hopefully, permanent part of the institution by effectively supporting the success of both the faculty and of the university’s mission.

The primary risk for the future does not seem to be lack support from faculty and administration, but rather the possibility of not being able to continue to grow to meet the requests brought on by its own success.

The current staffing model also presents challenges that may impact the IFD’s functioning in the future. The Self Study raises concerns about the way the director position is defined, as did one of the past directors and several faculty and administrators. The model has worked successfully so far, but questions about the future make it necessary to be proactive about the question rather than wait for it to fail. As the university looks forward, I would highly recommend that a group of relevant stakeholders meet to explore thoroughly the possibilities and try to arrive at a new, sustainable model that:
• Makes it possible for the IFD to maintain a high level of service without undue burden on those working there
• Allows directors necessary time and support for professional development and to acquire necessary skills
• Provides consistency and stability through leadership changes
• Does not negatively affect the careers of directors as teachers and scholars, nor the functioning of their home programs
• Does not depend on “luck.”

That’s a difficult list of demands that may be impossible to meet in its entirety, but might provide guidance for thinking through possible models. I also encourage the group exploring this question to be open to possibilities that may not at first seem workable. For example, although the faculty I spoke to placed high value on the director being “one of our own,” there are many, many examples of directors who are permanent faculty development professionals (usually with academic backgrounds in other disciplines) being very successful in this position and being trusted and valued by faculty. I’m not suggesting that Stockton needs to move to this model, but rather that those making the decision are careful not to make assumptions without looking to see how other models work in practice. If the important element is that faculty can trust the director and understands what it means to be faculty, that is what’s important, not necessarily that the director be a current member of the Stockton faculty.

Final comments
I left after my visit at Stockton impressed by what the IFD has accomplished, by the effectiveness and genuine caring of all three directors, by the investment of the administration, and by the enthusiasm and commitment of the faculty. I saw a community that truly seemed to believe in the “primacy of teaching,” and I saw that in a relatively short time the IFD has become an essential component of that community. The high numbers of constituents who cared enough to attend meetings to talk with me was testament to the value they placed on the IFD, and it was clear that faculty saw the IFD as critical to their continued success.

My two main recommendations, therefore, are not about fixing anything that is broken but rather about ways to try to ensure continued success for both the IFD and the university:

1. Continue to develop and expand assessment efforts to provide ongoing evidence of the impact of the IFD.
2. Seriously examine the leadership model and staffing of the IFD to make sure it can meet the needs of the future.

I enjoyed all of my interactions at Stockton and wish you continued success.
References

