

UA Center Devoted to Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

The Center for University Education Scholarship was created with a gift of more than \$3 million from a donor who wanted to see real change in how teaching and learning "happens on the ground."

Pila Martinez, University Communications | Feb. 22, 2017



The UA's collaborative learning spaces, like the one above, put the UA ahead of peers in improving teaching and student learning.

The University of Arizona has established the Center for University Education Scholarship, which will create and advance knowledge related to innovative teaching and effective student learning.

The center, known as CUES, was created with a gift of more than \$3 million from a donor who wanted to see real change in how teaching and learning "happens on the ground," said Provost **Andrew Comrie**. The donor has asked not to be identified.

"There is such a growing body of work that can inform improvement in teaching and learning," said **Debra Tomanek**, the center's director and a professor of molecular and cellular biology. "(But) there are so few opportunities for faculty to know about this stuff unless they already happen to be playing in the field."

CUES, she said, has three major goals. They are to:

- Create cross-disciplinary synergies among faculty members who share interests in innovation and scholarship on teaching, learning and assessment.
- Provide a central unit for intellectual leadership and operational support for the activities that embody those synergies.
- Support UA efforts in being recognized as a national leader in innovation and scholarship on teaching, learning and assessment.

Exploring and applying best practices in teaching and learning "can lead to all kinds of innovations," Tomanek said. "It can lead to improved learning outcomes and greater levels of satisfaction with teaching and, of course, innovations that can lead to more interested students."

In addition to the endowed director's position, the center will have several CUES distinguished professors, who will receive three years of funding and retain their CUES titles after the funding period ends. Together with the director, the CUES distinguished professors will form a think tank to grow and improve the center.

The center's activities will include:

- An annual symposium that will be opened in the future to other institutions.
- A seminar series that highlights UA teaching and learning scholars, as well as scholars from other universities. Faculty, staff and graduate students who teach will be invited to attend.
- Teaching scholar circles in which faculty and others come together around a common interest, such as how to use virtual reality to teach their courses.
- Assistance in locating funding for scholarly activities related to teaching and learning as well as online resources for scholarly exchange of ideas.

CUES, which formally was established in December, held its first symposium recently. The keynote speaker was Mark McDaniel, professor of psychology and director of the [Center for Integrative Research on Cognition, Learning and Education](#) at Washington University in St. Louis. McDaniel, a nationally recognized expert in learning and memory, is co-author of "Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning."

McDaniel praised the UA for efforts already underway, such as [collaborative learning spaces](#), [faculty learning communities](#) and courses designed to help students develop effective learning skills.

"You're at the forefront of teaching innovation and learning," McDaniel said. "You have stars in terms of evidence-based instructors."

Read more about McDaniel's presentation [here](#).