

## **Look Before You Leap**

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I chose the title of my talk to represent the three years I spent as Director of the Center for Teaching and Research Excellence at Wichita State University (WSU). I am fairly certain I would do it again, and I certainly do not regret those three years, but there are certain aspects of the position that I did not thoroughly consider before I took the job.

Some background information is necessary first. I had been on the faculty at WSU for almost 30 years and had served as Clinic Director and Department Chair. I had also been on Faculty Senate and many department, college, and university committees. During the time prior to the establishment of the Center for Teaching and Research Excellence (CTRE), I had served as the writer for the university's North Central Accreditation application. I worked closely with an Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and spent some time in those offices. I began to consider a "next step" in my academic life and thought I would like to pursue some type of administration beyond the department level. The Vice President was considering starting a center for teaching and I had the opportunity to serve on and then chair a task force to study the feasibility for a center, and then, when it was developed, I applied for and was selected as the Director for a three-year term.

The terms of my contract included a pay raise, a new office in a wonderful suite on the fourth floor of an older building in the center of campus (this alone was an enticement to a "basement-dweller" for 20-some years!), and excellent support staff in a full time administrative assistant and part time student assistant. This position was .5 EFT so I knew that I would have some difficulty going back and forth between the CTRE and the Communicative Disorders and Sciences (CDS) department, but anticipated that I could organize the division of days satisfactorily. Plus, I was excited to further teaching excellence and develop the Center and its many outreach activities.

Now to the reality of those three years and the things I did not consider or could not predict. The office, while large in size and perfectly decorated and furnished, was on a floor where the other offices housed the foreign languages department. The only “walk-by” traffic consisted of those faculty and students, and the Center was not in a convenient enough location so that faculty from across the campus could use the resources easily. Also, as many could have predicted, two half-time jobs do not equal one! I had difficulty sticking to a schedule because of conflicting meetings, demands, and so forth. The biggest surprise for me, however, was that I missed the comings and goings of fellow faculty members and students. I now had a large, quiet office with no interruptions and I found I missed those interruptions!

Now that I have returned full time to the CDS department and academe, I realize that the intangible benefits of one’s job are often not recognized or given enough credit. The daily interactions and familiarity of place, job expectations, and knowledge of colleagues are often not factored into what makes our work rewarding. I have had the opportunity to move into administration and I am pleased I did, but I am also even more pleased that I could return “home!”