

February 15, 2008

To Our POD Colleagues and Friends,

It is with great sadness that we acknowledge the recent deaths on the campuses of Northern Illinois University (DeKalb, IL) and Louisiana Technical College (Baton Rouge, LA). Despite our fervent hope that the deaths last April at Virginia Tech were an anomaly, it has happened again – twice this month. Heartbreaking stories and images of stricken students and memorials again flood the media. As a part of the higher education community, no matter where we sit in relation to the epicenter of these tragedies, they resonate deeply in all of us.

To our colleagues at Northern Illinois University and Louisiana Technical College, we want you to know that we are thinking of you now and are ready to lend support as the many challenges that lie ahead of you emerge.

With each crisis, we gain an increasingly clear understanding of ways in which faculty and instructional developers might contribute to recovery efforts on our campuses. For instance, it wasn't so long ago when students were the primary focus of these efforts. Now we know that entire communities are deeply impacted by campus tragedies.

We also know about the value of reaching out to one another. Nancy Polk, our POD colleague from Virginia Tech, offered that, *"...if I had to make one recommendation regarding resources, it would not be something to read, it would be to provide an opportunity or venue for faculty to support and be supported by other faculty."* At Virginia Tech last spring, they initiated this by sponsoring "brown bag lunches" the week of the shootings. And, she said, over and over and over again since then, she's heard about how valuable those gatherings were -- for different reasons, for different people.

To our colleagues at Northern Illinois University and Louisiana Technical College, we want you to know that we are thinking of you as you face these extraordinary tribulations. Also, I hope that as members of our faculty development community in higher education community, we will watch out for each other and help each other to get whatever supports each of us needs. Please do not hesitate to ask for help as you need it. Our POD webpage includes selected resources with links to materials developed by higher education colleagues across the country. You can find these at: <http://www.podnetwork.org/resources/crises.htm>.

On behalf of the members of the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education (POD), I extend deepest sympathies to the students, faculty, staff and parents of Northern Illinois University and Louisiana Technical College.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Mathew L. Ouellett,
President