

Two High-Value, Faculty Development Initiatives

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There are two kinds of programs that offer colleges and universities powerful ways to engage faculty in the work of increasing their capabilities as educators.

- One is for junior faculty;
- The other is for all faculty, junior and senior.

I. Teaching Certificate Programs – for junior faculty

The basic idea of Teaching Certificate Programs is for an institution to provide junior faculty with a set of learning activities that educate them on the “fundamentals of good teaching”. Starting their academic careers with such knowledge and skills enables them to generate more powerful learning experiences for students throughout their career .

Example: The Faculty Teaching Certificate Program (FTCP) at Minnesota State University at Mankato

Background: Minnesota State – Mankato is a comprehensive regional university with approximately 15,000 students and 500 full-time faculty members. The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) program was started in 2002 after the administration was pressured to provide some help for faculty on teaching, since that was a major emphasis at the institution and many faculty had little training in their doctoral programs.

The founding director of CETL heard about a similar certificate program at West Point and especially liked the idea of putting faculty members into groups, based on their availability during the week.

Description of the Faculty Teaching Certificate Program (FTCP)

Participants in the program have to complete several activities.

- I. Attend at least 7 of 8 seminars on the fundamentals of college teaching. These are 1 hour long and are focused on the following topics:
 - Active Learning
 - Classroom Assessment Techniques
 - Course Design
 - Teaching with Technology
 - Developing and Using Rubrics
 - Diversity in the Classroom
 - Critical Thinking and General Education
 - Capstone Project Presentations

- II. Complete a Classroom Observation. These are arranged through CETL and conducted by a faculty member trained by CETL. The 30+ who currently do the observing are all graduates of the FTCP.
- III. Get In-Depth Student Feedback. Trained upper division students observe a course and then interview students about their experiences in the course. These interviews are summarized and then shared with the faculty member.
- IV. Complete a Capstone Project. Participants must do something innovative in one of their courses by applying one or more ideas they learned about in the seminars. They write a report of the change and its impact. The reports are shared with other participants and made public on the CETL website.

Participants are assigned to a group of 6 to 10 faculty members each, based on the time slots when they are available to attend multiple offerings of each seminar.

At the end of the year, the president of the university presents the Certificates to the participants in an end-of-program luncheon ceremony.

Faculty Participation: The first year it was offered (2004) the goal was to register 10; there were 64 participants. By the end of the 5th year of the program, over 50% of all full-time faculty (N=270) had completed the program.

Impact of the Program: This program has had a major positive impact on faculty attitudes toward learning about teaching.

- Nearly half of all faculty (N=220) participate thereafter in other activities sponsored by the Center.
- Each year the number of faculty participating in one of the many faculty learning communities (FLCs) increases.
- Graduates of the TCP tell their beginning colleagues to contact the Center as soon as they arrive, to register for the FTCP.
- In the several years of the program, the culture of teaching and learning has changed dramatically at the university. The faculty culture now embraces "learning about teaching" as an accepted, important professional activity.

Impact on the Practice of Teaching: Active learning has now become common across the campus with lecture being used more selectively and in an intentional way by those who complete the FTCP.

Impact on Faculty: Many participants in the FTCP report this program alone has kept them from leaving Minnesota State Mankato. Others report more interest and excitement in attempting new ideas and strategies in their courses. They also report more friendships developing through meeting faculty they would otherwise not meet.

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II. Teaching Academy Programs – for junior AND senior faculty

A number of universities have begun using the idea of a “Teaching Academy” to encourage faculty members to engage in learning about teaching and learning throughout their academic careers. The following two examples illustrate varied ways of doing this.

Example #1: Spending time each year learning about teaching – New Mexico State University

Background: New Mexico State University is a research intensive, Hispanic serving, land-grant university with approximately 650 full-time faculty members.

The teaching/learning center was established in 1980 but re-organized as a “**Teaching Academy**” in 2003. Faculty members indicated that they didn’t mind coming to the center to learn about teaching, but they somehow wanted “credit” for doing so.

Brief Description of the Program: The center offers multiple workshops and learning opportunities throughout the academic year and keeps careful records of who participates and how many hours they spend learning about teaching. At the end of the academic year, participants are rewarded with membership in the Teaching Academy at an annual “Champagne & Chocolate” gala, attended by the president, provost and faculty who have earned a membership.

Faculty members earn one of **three kinds of membership**:

- “Basic” membership if they have 10 hours of participation during the past year,
- “Sustaining” membership if they have 20 hours, and
- “Distinguished” membership if they have 40 or more hours.

Their membership is good for one year.

Faculty Participation: The Teaching Academy has promoted a faculty culture in which learning about teaching has become widespread. More than 1,200 faculty, staff, and graduate students participate in one or more of the learning opportunities every year and 300 earn memberships in the Academy.

Impact: In a survey about the effect of the Academy, almost 90% of Academy members agreed with the statement, “Based on my experiences with the Teaching Academy, I have made positive changes in my teaching.” Over **80%** agreed with the statement, “Based on my experiences with the Teaching Academy, I have observed **positive changes in my students’ learning.**”

For further information about the program, contact:

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Example #2: Demonstrating “Pedagogical Competence” – College of Engineering at Lund University (Sweden)

Initial Idea: Starting in the 1990’s, the College (or Faculty) of Engineering at Lund (a very large, research-oriented university) began working to build an organization that valued a dynamic, learning-centered and scholarly-centered approach to teaching and learning. During that decade, it established a center for teaching and learning that began offering courses on college-level teaching for its professors. In addition, the idea of having a Pedagogical Academy was proposed and accepted. The Academy would be something that professors would apply for admission to by creating and submitting a portfolio.

Focus of Portfolio: The criteria for assessing their portfolios were intentionally defined as involving more than “being a good teacher”; the criteria focused on “*pedagogical competence*” which was defined as involving:

- A focus on student learning in one’s work as an educator
- Clear development over time
- A reflective (scientific) attitude

Development of Supporting Policies: During the next decade, the idea of the Pedagogical Academy led to two major policy developments.

First: Promotion. The Pro Vice Chancellor of the university made evidence of pedagogical competence a requirement for becoming a full professor. This was a major development. This meant promotion would require a portfolio and a history of working at becoming learning-centered in one’s teaching, contributing to the scholarship of teaching with formal presentations of research, and/or serious engagement in local discussions of teaching and learning.

Second: Money. The second decision was to allocate financial resources in relation to the Pedagogical Academy. This was done in two ways:

- Individual Salary Increase:** Any professor who was accepted into the Academy would be rewarded with a permanent salary increase.
- Departmental Supplement:** Departments in the College of Engineering would receive a budget increase for each of their professors who were so rewarded.

Policy Enforcement: When the dean of engineering began rejecting applications for promotion and salary rewards based on these policies, this had the intended effect of quickly re-orienting the attitudes of individual professors who had not yet accepted the need to become serious, reflective practitioners regarding their teaching.

The reasoning behind this whole development was that the College of Engineering wanted to be – and to become known as – a college where high quality teaching and learning occurred and where all faculty helped each other continuously improve as teachers.

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¹ Olsson, T. and T. Roxå (2013). "Assessing and rewarding excellent academic teachers for the benefit of an organization." *European Journal of Higher Education* 3(1): 40 - 61.