Get support and gather new ideas through Faculty Learning Communities

Date: February 4, 2020

Have you had the chance to participate in a Faculty Learning Community yet? We are a vibrant, dedicated group of faculty, graduate students, staff and administrators who care deeply about teaching and student learning. It's not too late to join; we meet six times over the semester to discuss issues around teaching and learning. This semester, our theme is focused on student engagement: what it is and how we can get students to engage with each other, with us and with the course content.

Background

In fall 2013, three FLCs were formed as part of the University of Arizona AAU Undergraduate STEM Education Project [1]. Members of the AAU Project Leadership Team developed the curriculum and acted as facilitators.

During the first year, the groups studied important peer-reviewed literature documenting the compelling evidence regarding the effectiveness of active learning strategies. They used the learning cycle as a foundation for creating learning tasks that encourage students to explore topics before concepts are introduced and to apply what they have learned after the concepts have been explained.

In the summer of 2017, Tom Wilson [2], associate professor at the Honors College, led efforts to clearly define and document the mission, goals, expected outcomes, assessment plan and implementation strategies for the Faculty Learning Communities Program. With support from the Association of American Universities (AAU), Mary Sorcinelli, senior research fellow at the Institute for Teaching Excellence and Faculty Development at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, contributed to this effort.

Currently

We now have approximately 10-12 learning communities each semester. This semester we have expanded our online learning communities from zero a year ago to four! We are excited about this development and look forward to offering more online options in the future. This spring, we have 21 fabulous facilitators who are donating their time and energy to these communities and over 110 members who are contributing their experiences, teaching strategies, and more!

One Faculty Learning Community member from the fall 2019 semester reported struggling with how to get students to come to class. Using input from the group, the faculty member developed a method of sporadic pop quizzes to help measure attendance.

"Because of this FLC, I have begun to incorporate more active learning methods into my
teaching, like working in small groups with white boards," the faculty member said. "This has helped my classroom climate considerably, and in the near future I am hoping to complete a workshop on further use of these methods." From a faculty learning community member, fall 2019.

We offer everyone the opportunity to learn about faculty learning communities through a kickoff at the beginning of the semester and a wrapup at the end. If you want more information, please sign up on the FLC listserv [3] or contact me [4] with any questions. Additionally, you can find Faculty Learning Community registration, newsletters, teaching guides, and other teaching resources at the Academic Affairs website [5].

It's not too late to join for the spring 2020 semester. We hope to see you soon!

Source URL: https://uaatwork.arizona.edu/node/45271

Links
[1] https://academicaffairs.arizona.edu/aau-stem
[2] https://www.honors.arizona.edu/person/tom-wilson
[3] mailto:flc@list.arizona.edu
[4] mailto:sgrace@email.arizona.edu