Faculty TEACHING CERTIFICATE Program (FTCP)

Minnesota State University – Mankato

Background

Minnesota State University is a comprehensive regional university with approximately 14,000 students and 500 full-time faculty members. The university has a large master's program and some doctoral programs. 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.

Initially, there was not strong financial support for CETL by the administration (although there was later), and some colleagues predicted there would be little participation since "faculty don't really care about improving their teaching." That prediction turned out to be quite wrong.

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 1.5 hours 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. Complete a Capstone Project. Participants have to 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 report is shared with other participants at the final sessions and major 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. This assures groupings that include professors from many different disciplines

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 then present the certificate and their capstone project to their deans as evidence of continuing preparation and study which is a part of the tenure and promotion process at MSU.

Faculty Participation

The first year it was offered (2004) the goal was to register 10; there were 64 participants. This year (2008-09) there are 47. By the end of this, the 5th year of the program, over 50% of all full-time faculty (N=270) will have 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) are participating in or leading one of the activities sponsored by the Center.
- Each year the number of faculty participating in one of the many faculty learning communities (FLCs) increases.
  - This year there will be about 150 participants in one of 12 different FLCs.
  - Faculty develop friendships in these FLCs and their relationships often reduce the stereotypes they have of other disciplines and the people in them.
- Graduates of the TCP are telling their beginning colleagues to contact the Center as soon as they arrive, to register for the FTCP.
- In five years the culture of teaching and learning has changed dramatically at the university from innovative teaching practices to improved course design to stronger relationships across the disciplines.

Impact on the Practice of Teaching: Active learning is now becoming common across the campus with lecture being used more selectively and in an intentional way by those who complete the FTCP. A few faculty members have moved to Team-Based Learning (Chemistry).

Impact on Students: Students report they enjoy and find helpful the IF-AT quizzes[1] being used by many faculty. Some faculty members have reporteded that grades are improving on tests and other measures of achievement.

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 not otherwise meet except through FTCP seminars.

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[1] The Immediate Feedback Assessment Technique (IF-AT) form is a copyrighted instrument that gives students, or more often small groups, immediate feedback – question by question – on how well they are answering questions on a quiz. For more information: www.epsteineducation.com

The Teaching Academy

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.

A teaching/learning center was established in 1980 but it was re-organized in 2003 with the concept of having a "**Teaching Academy**" at the center of the reorganization. This was done in response to feedback from faculty members 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 and Chocolate" gala, attended by the provost and other faculty.

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 700 faculty, staff, and students participate every year and 200-250 (>30% of the entire faculty) earn memberships in the Academy. Currently over 50% of the faculty attend at least one event sponsored by the Academy each year, with a mean attendance of 7 hours per faculty member.

Impact

After three years of operation, the Teaching Academy administered an online survey with a response rate of 62 percent (259 out of 415 members, past or present, responded to the survey).

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**."

(over)

Comments by professors about improved student learning include:

More enthusiasm about the subject matter, better performance on the exams.

Students seem to be more engaged. Fewer students withdraw and more students complete the course successfully.

Students are more eager to do small group/team-based work. I see this building community within the course and the major. Has helped provide learning resources for students who might otherwise be excluded because of their differences (e.g. gender, ethnicity, age, etc.).

Students are more alert and attentive during lectures, labs, and discussions. Their scores have improved as well.

Students now HAVE to actually read the book and complete assignments demonstrating what they have learned :)

Increased preparation for class. Better grades on national testing.

For further information about the program, contact:

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