LEAP for Instructors: Using AAC&U Resources for Effective Course Design
Case Study 3: Mary Carney

For the past five years Mary Carney has worked as the director of a center for teaching, learning, and leadership (CTLL) at the same southern institution (originally a two-year college that recently transitioned to a comprehensive university). In her time as director, Carney has prioritized programming to support the development and teaching excellence of non-tenure track (NTT) faculty. Although Carney admits this effort is a continually evolving work-in-progress as she learns to adapt to the specific needs and strenuous schedules of part-time faculty, she has made important strides toward inclusion of all faculty in the various CTLL development and support initiatives on a campus that relies heavily on NTT faculty.

Carney began this effort by organizing new faculty orientations geared towards the needs of part-time and NTT faculty. Carney’s three-hour Part-Time Faculty Orientation, which NTT faculty are strongly encouraged to attend, takes place each semester on the evening before classes begin and exposes new faculty to the university’s “nuts and bolts.” Carney observes, “We try to create a community with that mini-orientation.” After a welcome by senior administration, new faculty hear from a range of university staff. A representative from the registrar explains policies and procedures for accessing and protecting student information, including accessing grade roles and transcripts, reporting midterm and final grades, and adhering to FERPA requirements. The orientation also introduces faculty to Disability Services, Student Life, library services, public safety, and the use of campus technology.

As she works to orient faculty to the university’s policies and procedures in the Part-Time Faculty Orientation, Carney also aims to bring more contingent faculty into the dialogue concerning current research in teaching and learning. To that end, NTT faculty are welcome to attend a more formal, three-day orientation originally geared toward tenure-track faculty. During this orientation, Carney introduces faculty to high-impact practices, in particular undergraduate research, service learning, and diversity and global learning, as well as a number of AAC&U’s programs, including Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) and Bringing Theory to Practice. She was pleasantly surprised by the number of NTT faculty who found time to participate in the three-day orientation in 2013—at least ten out of a cohort of sixty.

Carney has also developed the New Faculty Institute, which invites NTT faculty to participate alongside tenure-track faculty in discussions on teaching and learning practices as well as navigating academic career tracks. Meeting once a month over the course of a year, the group of about ten faculty studies high-impact practices, selections from Boice’s (2000) Advice for New Faculty Members, and Ambrose et al.’s (2010) How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching. The
Institute also prepares faculty to analyze student evaluations, prepare their own annual reviews, and negotiate promotion and tenure. Carney tries to address work habits such as the work-research balance, especially for NTT faculty who are managing a 4/4 or 5/5 course load while trying to maintain their research and secure a tenure-track position. Carney notes that it can be emotionally trying for NTT faculty to invest in faculty development alongside their tenured colleagues, citing the strain felt by one contingent faculty member participating in the Institute who applied for a tenured position at the college and did not receive an offer. While Carney feels the mingling of faculty in the New Faculty Institute has been positive overall, she says, “It is hard to have a mix of tenure-track and non-tenure track when [the difference] often has nothing to do with the credentials of the people who are involved.”

CTLL also offers all faculty the opportunity to apply to the Faculty Academy on High-Impact Educational Practices. Accepting about ten participants each year, the Academy creates a community in which participants study high-impact practices and implement a high-impact practice project over the course of a year. As the academy admits a new faculty cohort each year, Carney suggests that the Academy is effectively creating a “network of local HIPs experts” to disseminate information on the role of HIPs in student success to the greater university community. In its first year (2012-2013), Carney’s institution compensated participating faculty $500 each for successful completion of the Academy; however, the Academy has not received continuing funding for participant compensation.

To engage faculty in these development opportunities, Carney uses a great deal of email and word of mouth. She also lists the university’s faculty development opportunities on an electronic notice board, and has started to use a blog to promote faculty development opportunities and Qualtrics as an RSVP system. For contingent faculty whose schedules do not allow for participation in formal faculty development initiatives, Carney has created an online catalogue of articles and resources as well as library guides that focus on high-impact practices. Carney states, “I really want to do what I can for faculty around the ‘just-in-time’ kind of training... which is particularly important for faculty whose workloads are often very heavy.”

References