Local Strategies: Creating and Nurturing Collaborative Communities of Practice

Elizabeth Beaulieu, Champlain College
Denise Bauer, Culinary Institute of America
Kris Wobbe, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Communities of Practice?

Are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly\(^1\).

\(^1\) Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Traynor, 2015. Introduction to Communities of Practice
Communities of Practice?

Are **groups of people** who share a **concern or a passion** for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly\(^1\).

\(^1\) Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Traynor, 2015. Introduction to Communities of Practice
Communities of Practice?

Are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly\(^1\).

\(^1\) Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Traynor, 2015. Introduction to Communities of Practice
Communities of Practice?

Are **groups of people** who share a **concern or a passion** for something they **do** and **learn how to do it better** as they **interact regularly**\(^1\).

- Formal or informal
- Elastic
- Share experiences/ideas to promote learning and improve practice

\(^1\) Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Traynor, 2015. *Introduction to Communities of Practice*
2020 Vision - Champlain College will be the finest small professionally- and globally-focused college in the United States.
FACULTY LEARNING COMMUNITIES:

A group of trans-disciplinary faculty engaging in an active, collaborative, yearlong program with a curriculum about enhancing teaching and learning and with frequent seminars and activities that provide learning, development, transdisciplinarity, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and community building.

--Milton Cox
THREE TYPES at CHAMPLAIN:

• Dean-initiated:
  
  o articles from CHE and IHE, etc.
  o Parker Palmer’s *The Courage to Teach*
  o Robert Nash’s *Helping College Students Find Purpose*
  o Corey Seemiller’s *Generation Z Goes to College*
• Faculty-initiated:
  - Allen Repko’s *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies* (integrative teaching and learning)
  - Donald Schon’s *The Reflective Practitioner* (reflective practice and portfolios)
• **Cross-divisional:**
  
  o Core Division and Stiller School of Business: Colby and Ehrlich’s *Rethinking Undergraduate Business Education: Liberal Learning for the Professions*
  
  o Diversity Council: creating a more inclusive campus environment
RESOURCES:

Building Faculty Learning Communities, Cox and Richlin, 2004

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Reconsidered: Institutional Integration and Impact, Hutchings, Huber, and Ciccone, 2011

http://www.units.miamioh.edu/flc/
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

• 2007 - Started a first year seminar program centered on great problems, and used team teaching.
• Faculty volunteered from across campus
• No experts!
• Program success led to growth
• 2011-2013 - Hired faculty 5 into the program – housed in different departments
1 Week Faculty Summer Institute

• Through these sessions faculty have
  – Agreed on learning outcomes and rubrics for the program
  – Developed an agreed upon framework for all the courses (with associated assignment ideas)
  – Developed and implemented research questions (SoTL)
  – Achieved a book contract!
  – Won significant recognition for the program
The Culinary Institute of America

- 2005 Creation of Liberal Arts Department
- 2005-2011 - 12 New Full Time Faculty Hired
- Annual Faculty Evaluations
- Faculty Professional Development
- Curriculum Development in liberal arts
- 2015 – Creation of a Food Studies Major
Faculty Community of Practice

• Ongoing process of mutual sense-making
• Creation of an identity that is distinct from others
• Defining a new territory
• Developing a common strategic voice
• Intentionally cultivated and sustained over time
Common Threads

• Arose from
  – A need to meet a goal with no defined path
  – A desire to leverage many beautiful minds
• Filled a need for professional development
• Is an evolving and ongoing community – 10 years for each of us
• *Requires no costly investment – time or money*
Elements for Success

• Flexibility
• Coalition of the willing – intrinsic motivation
• Autonomy — ideas come from peers
• Sense of significant contribution/recognition
• Public presentation/sharing
• Food (and adult beverages)
Benefits

• Empowerment
• Renewed sense of the joy in teaching
• Sense of community
• Significant advancement of programs