USING A SCENARIOS-BASED FACULTY LEARNING COMMUNITY FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: Faculty educators benefit from a supportive and collaborative learning community to discuss and share questions about: classroom assessment tools, student feedback, the development of a comprehensive syllabus, and interesting situations encountered by the new teaching professional. Discussion in a nurturing, moderated environment fosters a safe community for teacher practitioners and faculty collaboration. Substantial program resources encourage a realistic integration into the professional teacher role.

In the next decade there will be high turnover in faculty entering the teaching professions. Enrollment growth demands are necessitating the hiring of new faculty. Many of these faculties would benefit from mentorship as they enter their new roles.

A scenarios-based faculty learning community for faculty development introduces educators to a narrative story and its characters. This is accompanied with assigned readings, activities, and online collegial exchange. The goal is to become effective learning centered instructors. Faculty will be exposed to materials that document the importance of successfully engaging students from the first day of class. They will be encouraged to discuss the definition of learning-centered approaches to instruction, and to experiment with, and report on, learning-centered approaches they construct for use in their classrooms. Course syllabi will be revised as the importance and value of a comprehensive course syllabus is recognized. These syllabi will reflect a learning-centered approach, focusing on planning assignments, activities, and assessments that will facilitate student achievement via the use of active and cooperative learning, the appropriate use of the lecture, classroom assessment techniques, testing and assessing learning and feedback.

The scenarios community is designed to facilitate critical and creative problem solving (Wise, 2005). The training design is well-used when orienting adjunct instructors, new instructors, and instructors with limited teaching experience to their classroom and teaching responsibilities. The learning community facilitator works as the guide on the side – helping to deliver meaningful learning for teachers and to expand teaching skills in the learning college culture. By engaging with the story and its characters, taking inventories to assess their own teaching styles and teaching strengths, and participating in asynchronous discussion, faculty participants acquire the skills, attitudes and knowledge to plan and implement learning activities and assess student learning. Inventories for assessing and understanding student characteristics, including student learning styles and temperaments, will also be explored. This information provides tools and knowledge to assist the new teaching professional to be most inclusive in their teaching. The strong supportive network that is developed in this online training reinforces the new teacher’s role in the interdependent teaching community, which helps to generate successive transformative group insights (Siegel, 2005). The developer of this training design is the WisdomTools Scenarios™ design group (WisdomTools, 2005).

The new faculty member has multiple roles. It is critically important for the retention and career satisfaction of new teachers to receive supportive training for these roles. The scenarios-based faculty learning community accomplishes this.

References
