The Benefits of a Successful Online Faculty Learning Course: A Symbiotic Relationship

This paper will focus on the implementation of an asynchronous online training course for faculty at a major research institution. The participants included faculty (full-time, part-time, adjunct, and teaching assistants) who wanted to be successful in teaching online courses but were facing some obstacles, namely, being at locations throughout the state without instructional design assistance and not having a background in pedagogy or a strong technology skill set. The course, based on best practices and engagement principles, gave faculty a hands-on experience of what it was like to be an online student. Since its inception in 2008, this collegial, synergetic, learning environment has exposed faculty, sometimes for the first time, to technologies they can incorporate into their classes whether it be a face-to-face (f2f) course, a hybrid model or completely online. Are these faculty learners any different than the normal online learner? Do they have any different needs, concerns, or characteristics?

Two unforeseen benefits have developed from the course. The first benefit is a symbiotic relationship between the faculty learners and the course faculty/facilitator. This open, “two-way street” learning environment between the faculty learners and the course facilitator lasts far beyond the eight week course and is mutually beneficial. The second benefit is the building of a community of learners which is used in mentoring relationships throughout the statewide educational system and beyond. This session will highlight what works and what does not work well in this unique online relationship. Both sides of the symbiotic relationship will be represented. A faculty member who was a student in the online course will discuss the course from the learner’s perspective along with the faculty facilitator.