



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK OF SUPPORT FOR ADJUNCT FACULTY: COLLABORATION BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS

One of the biggest challenges that many colleges face is finding a way to communicate regularly with adjunct faculty about departmental guidelines and expectations about the courses they teach. Like many colleges, Cuyahoga Community College has official course outlines that describe courses, list course outcomes, outline course content, and list textbook choices. Program coordinators in each department visit with adjuncts regularly over each semester, updating them about the most current course outlines and textbooks being used at the College.

However, even with those standard measures in place, it became clear within our department and to our Dean of Academic Affairs that something more comprehensive was needed if we were to ensure that adjunct faculty were current with best practices in the field and within our department, especially those faculty teaching developmental English courses. Thus began a collaboration between various stakeholders within Tri-C that resulted in the compilation of resources for developmental adjunct faculty, a framework for providing real and consistent support. These resources include a Developmental English Adjunct Faculty Toolkit; workshops for English adjunct faculty on a regular basis; and a Peer Mentoring program, designed by Student Affairs, which links appropriate classrooms.

One of the first obstacles to success in creating a program such as ours was gathering input from various stakeholders within the college. It is important to gain input and feedback, create a process to do so in an efficient way, and allow everyone a voice in the process. Our major effort to meet this challenge began when the Dean created two new positions within the English Department—Transitional Writing Coordinator and Transitional Reading Coordinator. She saw a need for these positions and for formalizing a process, which had existed informally within our department, to help our

developmental students be more successful. Creating the new coordinator roles and beginning a process to create a toolkit for the department were priorities.

Since 50% of our students are taught by adjuncts—who may be unavailable to attend departmental meetings, workshops, webinars, or stay abreast of research practices in the education field—we needed a system to disseminate timely information and resources. The Toolkit, designed by faculty who understood the challenges of classroom management, the variation in student abilities and student engagement, and knowledge of best practices, became a valuable resource for adjuncts and an extension of communication to the larger college community.

Research studies suggest that adjuncts often do not feel supported by their institutions. Area office spaces, email addresses, and training do not create a complete environment of supportiveness. The adjunct toolkit bridges the gaps and allows greater interaction between full-time and adjunct faculty to benefit students, adjunct faculty, and the college community.

After the need for the toolkit was established as a priority, the Transitional Writing and Reading Coordinators were charged with creating a system for developing the toolkit and developing workshops to present it to adjuncts. A timeline and a process for conducting informal discussions about the toolkit with full-time English faculty and administration were presented to faculty in committee and department meetings. Feedback, sample documents, and suggestions for revisions were collected from faculty; and the toolkit was revised to reflect input from all full-time English faculty and presented for final approval. Full-time faculty were recruited to assist in presenting best practices and lead discussions at the workshops. Finally, workshops were designed to introduce and distribute the toolkits.

Each toolkit was divided into sections for each of the three developmental English courses, including: a handout with general course information, areas of emphasis, and sample assignment explanations; a copy of the Tri-C's Official Course Outline; a departmentally approved sample syllabus for the course; a section for



examples of diagnostic writing prompts and rubric; information about college resources for student support; and sample tutor and writing center referral forms.

In addition to introducing the Developmental Adjunct English Faculty Toolkit at our workshops, we introduced our Metro English Departmental Wiki (a site that contains hundreds of helpful digital resources for faculty, including a PDF version of the toolkit) and two binders of hard copies of various supplemental materials for developmental courses.

Workshops have been held over two semesters with more than 50 English adjunct faculty members attending. Toolkits have been distributed to all developmental English faculty. Many have signed up as members of our Departmental Wiki and are using the digital resources. We plan to continue adding resources to the toolkit and the Wiki, and to introduce these new items at upcoming workshops where discussions of best practices in teaching developmental English are encouraged. (The adjunct toolkit has been expanded to the math department and is being considered by other disciplines for their adjuncts, as well.)

Collaboration between various stakeholders throughout the college is key to supporting adjuncts successfully. A link to a successful mentoring program was established. This joint effort resulted in a new Peer Mentoring initiative with the adjunct English faculty members' classes. Student Peer Mentors were paired

with a Student Affairs "coach" and faculty member to support students in each class. Peer Mentors would attend class at least once a week to inform students about events and connect them to support services being offered on campus. Peer Mentors develop relationships with students in and out of the classroom, encouraging student engagement and providing them with a resource outside of the classroom and when the faculty member might not be available. The Peer Mentoring program, linked to the classroom experience, provided excellent support and helped make students aware of what the college has to offer. Feedback from adjuncts about this joint effort has been very positive.

The toolkit and the Peer-Mentoring program have provided adjuncts with critical support. Although the Peer Mentoring component is a new twist on mentoring at the college, the qualitative feedback received so far may translate into improved retention rates in the future.

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