



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR AN AMAZING PROFESSIONAL LIFE

Are you looking for excitement, meaning, scholarship, and excellence? Then leadership in professional development is for you. If you believe that student learning is at the core of teaching, then get involved in a campus learning community with your colleagues.

Many of you have faculty learning centers on your campuses, and that is a good thing. We started ours at Parkland College in 1994, under the influence of strong leadership and national trends that called for a unit designed specifically for faculty support. Additionally, faculty were hungry for scholarship that had a direct impact on their classrooms, assessment techniques that enhanced student learning, and a community of faculty learners. So we came together to address accountability issues and answer the question, "How do you know that students are learning?"

What Worked?

Faculty-owned and Faculty-driven Teaching/Learning Center. The call for the leadership position of the Center went out to all faculty, and the director was chosen by a committee of chairs and faculty. The advisory board was composed of representatives from all departments to ensure that the development of programming reached diverse faculty needs. The courses/workshops/seminars were designed and taught by faculty teams. We avoided solo facilitation due to stereotyping of faculty from disciplines that would limit certain types of scholarship and narrow the perception of usefulness for the learning community. All topics and materials were designed by the faculty, providing depth and richness in areas outside their particular content areas. All faculty course development was based on input gathered by survey, feedback from sessions, and solid research of the best practices in teaching and learning.

An inclusive and flexible system. Influenced by Peter Senge's thinking in *The Fifth Discipline*, the

leadership created a "multiple points of entry learning system," called the Faculty Academy. This system consists of one- or two-hour workshops, four-hour seminars, and semester-long courses. Flexibility was essential if we were going to get faculty to teach for the Center and, with their complex teaching schedules, to attend. Each session had specific learning outcomes, practical classroom applications, assessments, and written outcomes (such as short reports). All faculty were welcome, including part-time faculty who were treated equally and with respect. This often meant evening and weekend options. Eventually, inclusivity was expanded to incorporate staff and administration. Terry O'Banion's work in *The Learning College* was hard to ignore, along with fact that it was time to incorporate other departments that supported student learning.

Core Topics

Assessment. Pat Cross and Tom Angelo's concept of Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) (quick, usually anonymous feedback tools) was the cornerstone of our work. The Classroom Assessment Courses formed a learning community and created a culture of assessment on campus. Throughout the semester, the participants learned about CATs, implemented them in their classrooms to answer a "learning question," and shared their results and course adjustments. If faculty members learned from the CAT results that certain teaching practices were not very effective, they needed other options. The Center provided those other options.

Course Design. Dee Fink's *Creating Significant Learning Experiences* enabled faculty to design their courses, incorporating an interactive taxonomy of learning: foundational knowledge, application, integration, human dimension, caring, and learning how to learn. These powerful concepts guided the conversation/debate about the quality of online learning that was occurring frequently on campus, as our online course numbers were growing. Several faculty were beginning to "unbundle" components of their face-to-face courses. What should/could be taught with an online option? What should not? Why not? As the conversation continued, the Center responded



with an online course certification to aid faculty in quality online teaching/learning. Ultimately, the same question needed to be answered: "How do you know if students are learning?" The Center sessions were formed to enhance good learning results for students. Note: Technology for faculty was purposely infused into the student learning objective rather than being taught as a stand-alone subject.

Learning Differences. Healthy debate commenced on the hard science of learning styles. To inform that debate, we offered a few schools of thought—specifically, Ned Hermann's *Whole Brain Learning*, Howard Gardner's *Multiple Intelligences*, and Daniel Goldman's *Emotional Intelligence*. Faculty received texts and materials on these topics. Many faculty used some of this information to create course designs to open learning pathways for a diverse student population. This work also empowered students, offering them new tools and strategies to increase course completion success.

Orientation. A year-long course was developed from faculty feedback. Like many community colleges, the retirement numbers greatly increased the number of full-time hires. Much needed to be done to save institutional history, preserve core values and leadership, and understand the mission of the college and the nature of our students. The course ends with the cohort participating in the Leadership Retreat.

Leadership. Faculty leadership is essential to conducting the work of the Teaching/Learning Center. Core programming called for faculty to be trained in content areas, which often entailed traveling to conferences. NISOD, NCSPD, and the POD conferences were particularly valuable. The additional exposure to best practices and experienced, successful practitioners added an expertise that enhanced the quality of the facilitation. Leadership initiated a Department Chair Learning Series, the infusion of entrepreneurial components into the curriculum, and diversity initiatives across the state, at the college, and in the classroom—creating a respectful workplace.

Leadership of the Teaching/Learning Center should be passionate about the art, science, and scholarship of teaching and learning. Also, the leadership needs to respect and appreciate teachers, students, and staff. This leader must be able to listen and make things happen. One of those handy skill sets is the "both-and" mentality—i.e., rather than having to choose between two ideas or strategies, create a result or outcome where both have been served.

Conclusion

The Center for faculty learning is a place that equips faculty with techniques to enhance student learning.

It is a place where faculty feel safe, stimulated, and supported. It is an ongoing learning system that is *for* the people and *by* the people. It supports teaching excellence by award recognition at the national and state levels—including the amazing experience of becoming a NISOD Excellence Award recipient, which comes with a great trip to the Austin conference and \$1,000 for professional development. Since 1994, our Center has become embedded into the culture of the college.

If you are looking for amazing opportunities in your professional life, participate in your own Center for faculty learning. And, if you don't have one, create one. You will love it.

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Community College Week—NISOD Student Essay Contest

The National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) announces the third annual Community College Week—NISOD Student Essay Contest in honor of Scott Wright, past editor of Community College Week (1995-2000).

Essay Topic

Describe your most rewarding learning experience with a faculty member, staff member, or administrator at your community college.

- Each contestant may submit only one essay, and it must address the specific essay topic.
- The essay text is limited to a minimum of 400 and a maximum of 500 words.

\$3,000 in Prizes

- \$1,000 Scholarship to the Student Author
- \$1,000 to the Faculty/Staff/Administrator Featured in the Essay
- Complimentary 2011–2012 NISOD Membership to the Student's College (\$1,000 value)

Essay Submission Deadline
November 8, 2010

www.nisod.org/student_essay

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