

Auto-Focus Your Professional Development: Use of Faculty Learning Communities

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BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVE

- Faculty learning communities (FLCs) are an approach to faculty development
- Small groups regularly meet to focus on specific aspects of scholarly teaching^{1,2}
- Comprised of specific cohorts or a mixed membership^{1,2}
- Facilitator guides and organizes the FLC and enables group to become self-directed³

At the Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) College of Pharmacy, FLCs are intentionally and voluntarily formed groups of individuals with similar interests who want to advance their knowledge and skills. Here we describe the evolution and outcomes of FLCs.

METHODS

Faculty are engaged in collaborative learning through a series of virtual meetings and initiatives.

- Professional and administrative areas of interest were identified
- Email invitations were used to recruit
- FLC-specific goals were set by members
- Literature was identified and used as FLC framework
- Meetings and activities were conducted every one to three months
- Future topics of interest were discussed at the end of each FLC

Faculty Learning Communities at SWOSU

2013

Active Learning

Meeting Chat

The first group was formed by the SWOSU Assessment Coordinator after a college-wide seminar about active learning techniques spurred interest. Initial purpose was to discuss and generate ideas for active learning with an intent to implement and report back to the group. This FLC stimulated ideas for subsequent topics and directions.



2016-2018

Book Club/ Literature Review

Meeting Chat

Group members selected to review the book, "What Best College Teachers Do" by Ken Bain. Hard copies were distributed, and specific chapters were discussed in each meeting. This led to literature review and discussion about student motivation and competency-based education, which further expanded upon the original active learning FLC topic.

2018-2021

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Meeting Chat

Scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) was the topic for this FLC. Group members selected SOTL literature to discuss, including "Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate," by EL Boyer. Members discussed past SOTL activities, as well as future projects. The final activity of this FLC was presentation of a "Lunch and Learn" series of faculty development seminars on SOTL.

Lunch and Learn Series Topics

- SOTL Types and Boyer's Definition of Scholarship
- What Makes It Scholarship?
- What is the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning?
- Parts of a Whole...Where do you fit in?
- Faculty Examples

2021-2024

Peer Review

Meeting Chat

The intent of the group is to develop a dynamic and personalized quality improvement process to systematically, collaboratively, and non-judgmentally encourage professional development. The group is piloting a peer review process that focuses on various elements of teaching. The goal is to introduce the peer review process to the faculty and garner feedback to exercise the cycle of scholarship.

2023-2024

Administrative and Leadership

Meeting Chat

The focus of this FLC is to foster professional growth in the areas of leadership and development of administrative interests and talents. Members have engaged in discussions of the book "Strengths Based Leadership" from Gallup, StrengthsFinder assessment, and the DISC Work of Leaders profile.

Peer Review Process for Teaching

- Development of peer-observation tools
- Piloted peer review process in various applications
- Present pilot outcomes and seek feedback
- Investigate creation of a scholarly teaching award to incentivize participation

RESULTS

The FLCs have yielded a variety of outputs, ranging from internal discussions to the provision of college-wide professional development activities.

- Five FLCs have been conducted
- Each FLC consisted of five to nine participants
- Duration and scope varied

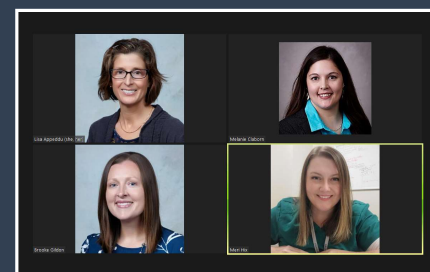
LESSONS LEARNED

- Virtual format allowed for more participation by faculty in various locations
- Short meetings over lunchtime or evening were feasible for most participants
- University faculty outside of the COP were uniquely beneficial and easily incorporated

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of FLCs at SWOSU has provided a self-governed and low-barrier-to-entry mechanism to the following:

- Enhanced professional development opportunities
- Increased engagement between practice and science faculty
- Initiated a culture of appreciation for the scholarship of teaching and learning



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