

Community of Learning (CoL)

March 2016

Definition

- group of 6-15 (recommended 8-12) interdisciplinary faculty, who engage in collaborative activity to enhance teaching and learning, to promote the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), and to build community; faculty-led group
- also known as Community of Practice (CoP) and Faculty Learning Community (FLC)

Rationale

"The growth of any craft depends on shared practice and honest dialogue among the people who do it. We grow by private trial and error, to be sure—but our willingness to try, and fail, as individuals is severely limited when we are not supported by a community that encourages such risks" (Palmer, 1998, p. 144).

Research shows that:

- encourages interdisciplinary collaboration among faculty
- strengthens ties to the university
- promotes sharing of resources and knowledge
- supports professional development beyond discipline
- directly serves the University's mission
- CoL faculty "can develop into SoTL presenters in just one year"
- "pre-tenure faculty members, in their second through fifth years who are members of [CoL] have entered SoTL development as novices and have presented the results of their teaching projects at a national conference 8 months later"

Benefits include:

- 1) response to faculty needs, feedback, and requests
- 2) create a community and nurture a culture of learning
- 3) create a safe space for faculty to collaborate and share ideas
- 4) positively impact teaching and learning
- 5) positively impact faculty professional development

Structure

- 1) **Commitment** from CoL Leader to lead the community to explore a topic/problem for a set length of time
- 2) **Application process** for CoL Leader, including Department Chair and Dean Endorsement
- 3) **Incentives** for CoL Leader and CoL group and **budget** for CoL
- 4) CFEI will provide **support** and resources to plan and facilitate CoL events
- 5) Learning **activities** of the CoL
- 6) **Culmination** of CoL with recognition from CFEI
- 7) **Dissemination** of CoL learning outcomes

Membership

Voluntary interdisciplinary faculty group

Leadership

Voluntary through an application process

Duration

Semester or academic year with weekly/bi-weekly/tri-weekly events

Type

Topic-based

Example Learning Topics

Classroom management, assessment and evaluation strategies, service learning, cooperative learning, experiential learning, active learning, blended learning, STEM, online collaboration, global university (scholars and fellows), large classrooms, scholarship, plagiarism, ePortfolios, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), etc.

Suggested Meeting/Activity Types

- Meetings (F2F and/or web-based)
- Book talks
- F2F and/or online dialogues (dilemma discussions, journaling, blogs, chats)
- Self-reflections
- Observations
- Trainings, Seminars, Courses
- Experiments/Laboratories
- Practice-based or Project-based applications
- Mini-portfolios
- Presentations
- Publications

Faculty Leader Responsibilities

The Community of Learning Leader will:

- encourage group membership, attendance, and participation
- design and conduct learning activities
- design a culminating activity/project/product
- present CoL learning outcomes to the CFEI, Faculty Center Advisory Committee (FCAC), and the university

CFEI Supports

The CFEI will provide the following support, as feasible:

- help with administrative tasks
- setup and facilitate learning activities
- budget management and purchasing/procuring
- technology training and support and support with course design and instruction, as appropriate

Faculty Leader Benefits

Upon successful completion of the Community of Learning, the CoL Leader will be awarded:

- \$500 stipend for travel expenses & fees for a professional development event
- plaque/certificate for recognition of service

Community of Learning Budget

A term budget of \$500 (for the semester or academic year) will be provided to the CoL to pursue targeted learning activities and outcomes. Suggested expenditures include:

- learning resources
- training materials
- classroom technology tools or equipment
- teacher technology tools or equipment
- professional development training, course, webinar, or conference
- speaker/presenter on learning topic

Resources

Cox, M.D. (2013). *Creating faculty learning communities: 16 recommendations*. Madison, WI: Magna Publications.

Cox, M. D. (2013). *How do I use FLCs to strengthen institutional assessment?* Madison, WI: Magna Publications.

Cox, M. D. (2007). Developing the scholarship of teaching and learning using faculty learning communities. *Essays on teaching excellence*, 19(2). Retrieved from <http://podnetwork.org/content/uploads/V19-N2-Cox.pdf>.