

Learner-Centered Education Program
Arizona Board of Regents
INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FORM

Proposal Title: Trii-University Collaboration on Learner-Centered Practice: Creating Learning Communities Among Faculty and Students

Institution: University of Arizona DEPT/Unit: University Teaching Center

Multi-Campus/University Projects
(check other campuses or universities participating)

List other participating agencies:

ASU Main

UA

ASU East

UA South

ASU West

NAU

Briefly describe the program and the development plan.

The intent of the project is two-fold: (1) to develop a critical mass of faculty who will engage collaboratively in the study of learner-centered instructional practice, apply what they learn, assess the impact of what they learn, and share their learning with other faculty, and (2) for those faculty to develop and implement an LCE advocacy plan for each of their campuses that will ultimately bring faculty and institutional culture to actively embrace more learner-centered approaches to college education.

Funding Category

Indicate a primary (P) and, if applicable, secondary (S) funding category:

Professional Development P

Program or Course Development/Modification S

LCE Research

Improved Assessment of Learning Outcomes S

Authorizations

Project Director

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Signature

Official Authorized to Enter into Contractual Obligations

Signature _____

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Tri-University Collaboration on Learner-Centered Practice: Creating Learning Communities Among Faculty and Students

Abstract

The primary goal of this project is for the three state universities to collaborate in a learning community comprised of faculty, academic professionals, graduate teaching assistants, and students to accomplish three major objectives: 1) exploring, identifying and implementing learner-centered teaching strategies in a minimum of 70 classes in the Fall of 2004; 2) applying existing classroom assessment models and techniques to determine which instructional approaches best produce the desired learning outcomes; and 3) developing a faculty development process model through which the continued exploration and implementation of learner-centered instructional practice can expand to become commonplace in higher educational environments in which the lecture method still dominates. Secondary goals include:

- increasing the use of learner-centered instructional strategies and understanding how learner-centered instructional strategies enhance student learning;
- increasing faculty use of classroom assessment techniques to determine the effectiveness of their instructional practices;
- stimulating dialogue on each campus and among campuses to gain insight about what factors would increase both the faculty's implementation of learner-centered instructional strategies and the use of classroom assessment strategies in the tri-university system.

This project builds on an ABOR LCE grant awarded to the three universities in Spring 2002. That grant provided an opportunity to demonstrate that the faculty initially involved in learning and implementing learner-centered instructional and assessment strategies experimented enthusiastically with learner-centered strategies, collaborated effectively at all three state universities, saw positive results in their students, and have continued to embrace LCE principles in their teaching, as reported to ABOR, by invitation, at the September 25, 2003, board meeting.

The intent of the current project is to develop a critical mass of faculty at the three institutions who will engage in the study of learner-centered instructional practice, apply what they learn, assess the impact of what they learn, and share their learning with other faculty through workshops, mentoring, web-based materials, and videotapes at their own and each other's universities. They will also develop a plan to promote learner-centered instructional philosophies and practices to their own departments and colleges. This will ensure broader institutional commitment to and wider adoption of learner-centered instruction and assessment strategies within our state university system.

We request funding of \$100,000 for the second phase of this project in recognition that transformative change in long-standing instructional practice is a major challenge that cannot be accomplished in a semester or two.

Identification of Need

Patricia Cross and Thomas Angelo (1993) state in Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers that, "Faculty have an exceptional opportunity to use their classrooms as laboratories for the study of learning and through such study to develop a better understanding of the learning process and the impact of their teaching upon it." (p. xiv) LCE, characterized by direct involvement of learners, deeper understanding of content, and retention of skills readily transferable to life and work, provides a

rich environment for students and teachers to engage in continuous monitoring of student learning. The recent national LCE initiative has certainly engaged some faculty, administrators and academic professionals in dialogue and institutional visioning. However, a coherent approach for wider adoption, implementation, and assessment of learner-centered instructional practices has not been undertaken within the university system in Arizona. A multi-university learning community committed to studying, implementing, assessing, and sharing the impact of learner-centered instructional strategies on student learning will stimulate wider commitment to LCE in the same way that faculty “early adopters” help to inspire other faculty in the use of technology as learner-centered instructional tools.

Reviews of faculty development endeavors nationally conclude that 1) faculty development efforts are the most effective in resulting in changes in instructional practice if they are led by faculty, and 2) the most beneficial aspect of faculty development experiences are the interactions and collaboration with other faculty. Whereas research in the higher education faculty culture is often collaborative, teaching has traditionally been an insular and isolated experience. This explains faculty members’ enthusiasm about faculty development programs that provide a community of scholars or a collaborative approach in which common instructional issues and challenges can be discussed freely and where shared insights are accepted and appreciated. Therefore, supporting faculty in a collaborative learning community in which they will develop and implement specific working models of learner-centered teaching practice and assessment is critical. Additionally, testing a faculty development process for expanding the implementation of LCE in post-secondary classrooms is a viable project to operationalize the vision of a learner-centered state university system.

Currently, the three state universities target faculty development efforts through the University Teaching Center at The University of Arizona, the Center for Learning and Teaching Excellence at Arizona State University, and the Faculty Development Program at Northern Arizona University. Yet, there is no formalized collaboration between these units, and there is no formalized, systemic process to guide faculty in working collaboratively to explore, define, identify, test, revise, and assess learner outcomes that result from LCE practice. Faculty members, for the most part, have been “out there” engaging in isolated and individualized efforts. Moreover, although many current faculty development efforts focus on improving learning, most individual faculty, following the lead of higher education itself, do not systematically assess the impact of these efforts on learning and learners. Thus, in addition to teaching strategies, this project aims to provide faculty with assessment techniques and tools that will provide insights into and evidence of enhanced student learning. In Cross and Angelo’s (1993) experience, implementing assessment techniques “makes faculty more systematic and sensitive observers of learning in the classroom, and the opportunity to discuss their observations with colleagues leads naturally to questions and tentative theories about teaching and learning.” (p. xiii-xiv)

Forty-five faculty from the three state universities participated in the first round of our project. We seek funding for the second round, in which we will bring thirty-six new faculty together with nine returning faculty participants from the first round (plus two graduate teaching assistants, teaching center/faculty development program faculty, and academic professionals from each of the universities). UA and ASU will include participants from Sierra Vista and ASU East and West in their groups of participants. We include returning faculty in order to maintain continuity and to promote faculty-to-faculty mentoring. Each campus will also include undergraduate students in the on-campus activities to the extent possible; undergraduates will participate indirectly by providing feedback in classes. Project participants will work together to formalize the elements of LCE practice and assessment and to refine the faculty development model explored in the first round to provide a process for infusing instructional practices at their respective universities. Returning faculty will play a lead role in developing and delivering workshop sessions for new faculty. This process will lead the learning community to explore learning theory and the relationship between theory and practice enriched by the first-hand experience of returning faculty.

The project will provide all participants with materials and resources about learner-centered instructional practice (what it is, how to implement it through innovation and collaboration) and classroom assessment (how to get started using it, and the insights it provides in understanding the complexities of learning). Given typical faculty teaching loads, we estimate that approximately 70 new classes and 3500 students will participate in learner-centered classroom environments at The University of Arizona in 2004-05 as a result of this new round of the project. These classes and students will be in addition to those taught by faculty who participated in the first round of the project (for estimation purposes we used a class size of 50, but we speculate the number of students will be much larger as we include faculty who teach large general education courses).

This project supports the Learner-Centered Education Initiative as a professional development opportunity designed to prepare faculty to implement principles and strategies of LCE practice and assess them in learning environments with specified learning outcomes. The first round has provided some specific models for instruction and assessment that any interested faculty member can tailor to their own learning environment. Links between various instructional methods and the learning outcomes they promote will continue to be clearly identified and actively distributed during the second round. In addition, as a result of their learning faculty are poised to share their insights and findings with other faculty as well as instructional units within their own university and across the state university system. In the second round of the project, we propose to focus on providing the learning community with a structure and a collaborative faculty development process that will infuse learner-centered instruction into the university system.

Technical Needs

A database will be developed to capture findings and to begin a longitudinal process for collecting data about LCE at our universities. A computer technician will be employed to continue developing the database. Faculty will be supported by the Learning Technologies Center at the University of Arizona in the creation and/or use of instructional technology tools as needed for the learner-centered strategies they choose. Specific materials will be provided to all participants including Cross and Angelo's Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers (1993), Huba and Freed's Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: Shifting the Focus from Teaching to Learning (2000), and Svinicki's Teaching and Learning On the Edge of the Millennium: Building On What We Have Learned: New Directions for Teaching and Learning (2000). If needed, an in-house assessment consultant will be used in designing aspects of assessment of the overall project.

Work Plan

Date	Project Goal	Objectives
Feb/March 2004	Planning	Faculty development units at the participant universities work with each other and with first round participant faculty to develop the content and process for the second round.
April 2004	Selection	Identify 12 new faculty, 3 returning faculty, 1 graduate student and 2 undergraduate students from each university.
May/June 2004	Initial learning community meeting	Learning community convenes in Flagstaff for a two-day meeting in late May or early June to: 1. Learn LCE strategies, and then identify specific strategies that participants will explore in their Fall 2004 classes. 2. Explore and select appropriate assessment models for measuring student outcomes.
June – August	Preparation	Participants refine their work plan and prepare materials for use

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2004		when classes begin in August.
August 2004	Summer Work Report Meeting	Convene in Flagstaff (two days) to report on the results of summer work and share and critique plans for implementation of learner-centered principles in Fall 2004 classes.
August – May 2004	Sharing	Use technology (active web site, possibly teleconferencing) to support inter-university collaboration such as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sharing reports of participants' experiences are making. 2. Identifying challenges and possible solutions. 3. Providing peer support.
August – May 2004	Individual Institution Activities	Participants at each university: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attend and lead regularly scheduled 1 ½ hour meetings to discuss progress and problems. Invite other interested faculty and graduate students to attend. 2. Plan and lead two interventions per semester in which they advocate for the use of LCE principles in teaching. Examples: workshops for other faculty, presentations to and demonstrations for department meetings and administrators.
January 2005	Dissemination	Participants from both rounds meet in Tempe (one day) to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Present and discuss results of following LCE principles in their classes. 2. Plan an open forum to be hosted at each campus at which they will discuss what they have learned with interested faculty, graduate students, and administrators. 3. Develop a working model for advocacy of LCE on each campus. <p>Participants will be encouraged to and assisted with publication of outcomes and results in journals such as the new <u>Communication Education</u> journal that calls for submission on learning outcomes associated with instructional practices across disciplines.</p>

Key Personnel

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Other key staff members will be drawn from each unit listed above. Faculty participants, graduate teaching assistants, and undergraduate students will be selected by each university once the project is funded. A diverse representation of disciplines will be targeted in order to facilitate the broadest campus impact of students and to initiate dialogue across many departments and colleges.

Expected Results and Outcomes

At the individual faculty level, the expected outcomes of this collaboration are (1) greater exposure to LCE strategies and techniques, (2) active experimentation with and implementation of learner-centered education in classes, and (3) knowledge and implementation of LCE assessment practices. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected from formative and summative evaluation processes used in the classroom with students and during project sessions with faculty participants.

At the institutional level, the expected outcomes are (1) development of an LCE advocacy plan for each institution, (2) development of advocacy support materials from data collected by faculty participants, and (2) initial stages of activity based on the advocacy plans. The goals of the plans will be developed during the course of the project but are expected to include (a) greater understanding at administrative levels (departments, colleges) of the benefits of LCE to students, faculty, and institution, (b) greater administrative support for faculty attempting to reorient their teaching according to LCE principles, and, ultimately (c) a shift in faculty and institutional culture to embrace LCE.

Quantitative data will include numbers of participating faculty, courses, and students as well as types of instructional and assessment approaches used. Pre- and post- assessments of faculty attitudes toward LCE will be given. Qualitative data will include the formative assessment activities of individual faculty as they engage in the cycle of planning, implementing, revising, and documenting what they learn from this process about their own teaching as it relates to student learning outcomes. Summative data of all faculty activity, in both quantitative and qualitative forms, will be summarized and a catalog of learner-centered approaches and their assessment options will be created which will form a searchable database for other faculty to use. Faculty will be videotaped using learner-centered approaches in order to provide teaching materials for use with other faculty. Finally, documentation of the specific ways in which student learning is enhanced through learner-centered instructional strategies will be provided. Parallel kinds of quantitative and qualitative data will be collected as project participants begin implementing their advocacy plans on their campuses.