Moving Beyond the First Semester: Expanding Learning Communities at the College of Staten Island

CUE
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Developing a Learning Community
Faculty Development Plan

- Step #1: What is learning community?
- Step #2: How to create an effective learning community
- Step #3: Creating teams
- Step #4: Guiding development of integrated curriculum
- Step #5: Peer-review of team plans
- Step #6: Scheduling & Implementation
- Step #7: Mentoring/Monitoring
- Step #8: End of semester/post-mortem
- Step #9: Assessment/Feedback
- Step #10: Expansion of Learning Communities/Spring 2015
Step #1: What is a learning community?

- **Goal: Awareness**
  Most faculty did not know what a learning community was, and those that had some knowledge, thought of a learning community was only the linking of two courses.

- **Faculty Development:**
  Faculty were invited to participate in a 3 part workshop to learn what a learning community is and how to make it truly effective and dynamic.
Step #2: How to Create an Effective Learning Community

• **Goal:** Advancing the understanding of an *effective* learning community

• **Faculty Development Workshop #1:**
  
  Faculty were presented with a number of different models of learning communities with differing levels of integrated curriculum
Step #3: Creating Teams

• **Goal**: To bring faculty together from different academic disciplines to form learning community teams

• **Faculty Development Workshop #2**:  
  1. Faculty were asked to bring a copy of the syllabus of the course they planned to teach as part of a learning community  
  2. Faculty were asked to share some of what they hoped to achieve by having their course linked with another  
  3. Working teams were then formed based on common themes/interest
Step #4: Guiding Development of Integrated Curriculum

• **Goal:** To explore the many possibilities of how curriculum could be integrated to form truly effective and dynamic learning communities

• **Faculty Development Workshop #2:**
  Using their original syllabi, teams worked to develop syllabi that reflected shared curriculum and common theme(s)
Step #5: Peer-review of Team Plans

• **Goal:** Faculty would have the opportunity to present their LC team plans for peer-review

• **Faculty Development Workshop #3:**
  Teams, who had met independently between workshops #2 & #3 to fully develop their plans, had the opportunity to present their plans & syllabi before their peers for review
Step #6: Scheduling & Implementation: *It Takes a Village!*

- **Administrative Goals:**
  1. **Identify courses** that would fulfill General Education requirements for both Liberal Arts and STEM majors for first year students for the entire 2014-2015 academic year
  2. **Identify “at risk” student populations** that could greatly benefit from a specially designed learning community
  3. Work with **Academic Departments** to identify course sections to be linked in learning communities
  4. Work with **Office of the Registrar** to code linked courses
  5. Work with **Center for Advising & Academic Success** to develop ways to inform students of the existence and benefits of registering for learning communities
  6. Work with **Design Services** to develop a pamphlet for distribution at **New Student Orientation** that clearly articulates what a learning community is, the benefits of being part of a learning community, and a listing of each learning community being offered
Step #7: Mentoring/Monitoring Newly Formed Learning Communities

• **Goal:** Mentor/Monitor the progress of established learning communities

• **Planned Faculty Development Workshop:** Plans are in progress for a mid-semester meeting to bring together all of the faculty who participated in the earlier workshops (Feb-May 2014) and those who are teaching in learning communities in the Fall 2014 semester to monitor how well they are achieving their LC goals and to mentor those that are in need of extra support
Step #8: End of semester/Post-mortem

• **Goal:** To have faculty participate in a group discussion of what worked, what didn’t, and to have peers offer suggestions for further advancing the success of all learning communities

• **Planned Faculty Development Workshop:** Plans are in progress for an end of semester post-mortem discussion for all faculty who taught in learning communities for Fall 2014
Step #9: Assessment/Feedback

- **Goal**: To assess the success of the learning communities from both the faculty and students perspectives

- **Planned Faculty Surveys**: Work has begun on developing a survey to enable faculty to provide feedback on their experience teaching in a learning community in the Fall 2014 semester

- **Planned Student Surveys**: Work has begun on developing a similar survey for students reactions to their experience

- **Planned Tracking Students’ Retention Rates**: Plans are in progress to develop a tracking mechanism to determine whether there are higher rates of retention amongst students who participated in learning communities
Step #10: Expansion of Learning Communities/Spring 2015

• Goal: Moving Beyond the First Semester!

Spring 2015

1. A limited number of learning communities will be offered for incoming freshmen

2. A large number of learning communities will be offered for second semester students, which will fully expand learning community opportunities providing the curricular structure of a first year experience at CSI
Plans for Further Expansion

• Continue to offer faculty development workshops that bring interested faculty together to develop learning communities
• Continue to offer faculty development workshops that provide mentoring/monitoring and feedback opportunities for faculty actively teaching in learning communities
• Continue to identify student populations that could greatly benefit from the learning community structure
• Continue to work with academic departments to develop learning communities for specific majors