

The Anderson Conference
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Session 3
Building Community among faculty

Relationship among faculty matters because it can increase (or impede) learning
Use each other to help students learn

Improvement is not a dirty word

All teachers can improve; most should
Improve because you want to; you can't be forced to
Not about a ratings game
Need feedback & involvement of others
Improvement doesn't mean you're deficient
How do you know a day in class has gone well?

Link efforts to improve to more & better learning

Faculty assume students learn the way faculty do, but faculty have more familiarity with the content

Don't trivialize the process of instructional Change

Teachers equate teacher improvement to learning new techniques
Need repertoire of techniques, but teaching is more than learning techniques
Compare to playing piano; need techniques, but technique alone falls flat
Example: how to handle wrong answers

- Talk about what might be right
- Get student to explain reasoning
- Confirm the error ("you're wrong")
- Lead student to better answer
- Try the answer and see where it leads

All are possible techniques, but knowing what to use when is important

Unless you reflect on the techniques, responses are patterned:

"Interesting idea – somebody else"

(student thinks "Another dumb answer")

Artistry of teaching comes from managing repertoire of techniques

Discuss how to handle these problems with other faculty

Recognize centrality of faculty member in the process of improvement

As you can't learn for students, you can't change someone else's teaching

Importance of colleagues

Faculty turn to each other as principle source of info about teaching and learning

Mid career faculty in particular need vibrant relationship with colleagues

Groups can be transitory or permanent

Activities that build faculty community

Getting into each other's classrooms (Not for evaluative purposes)

Observe teaching outside of discipline – not knowing content allows you to focus on techniques; some disciplines do things better than others:

- Class participation – language class
- Classroom management – PE class

“Master learner” program – instructor takes a course with cohort of 20 students in an area that the instructor has no expertise; instructor proposes methods of learning (<http://www.wpunj.edu/academics/cte/ml.htm>). Instructor sees the problems that students wrestle with when learning unfamiliar material.

“cook's tour of classes”

When you visit classes, be a student

Course website for instructors to share materials

Share artifacts of teaching (exams, syllabus, assignments)

Meeting of faculty who teach same course

Offer professional development opportunities to part time faculty

Read and discuss books & articles about content & about teaching / learning (recommends 50 Ways to Leave Your Lectern - Constance Courtney Staley)

Read outside of discipline

Lead instructor for course mentors part time faculty

Part time faculty tend to have higher student ratings than full time faculty

Retention is critical (faculty is #1 influence on retention)

How do colleagues talk to each other about teaching?

Typically, faculty orient towards judgment – that class was good or that class was bad

Better to describe what you observe rather than evaluate

How do we think about our own teaching?

Write a description of how you teach without judgments

Don't over generalize

Own your opinions

When receiving feedback, don't overreact to negative feedback

Share teaching failures with each other

Breaks are important - How to take class break

- Stretch moment
- Share notes with student next to you
- Share news
- Ask interesting question

Write for 5 minutes after each class (review when next time giving that class

We practice “Content reigns supreme”

Don't sever link between content and learning