 *Office of the Dean*

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To: Brenda Thames

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From: Dr. Jennifer Hamilton, Dean, Business, Behavioral & Social Sciences

Bill Anelli, Professional Development Committee, Academic Senate

Date: 19 August 2015  
Re: Proposal: Establishing Faculty Learning Communities

**Background:** The below proposal for establishment of Faculty Learning Communities (FLC) is based on Dr. Milton D. Cox’s FLC cohort-model used in over 25 colleges or universities in the U.S. For further information please see: <http://www.muohio.edu/FLC> or <http://www.units.miamioh.edu/flc/> .

**Purpose**: The purpose of establishing Faculty Learning Communities is threefold:

1. Advance student success and student equity by providing opportunity for faculty to advance their pedagogical skills within a post-secondary and community college context. This includes knowledge of the learning process via engagement in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL).
2. Promote community and inter-disciplinary collegiality amongst faculty in a variety of disciplines.
3. Provide the forum for faculty in a variety of stages in their careers to have dialogue about the craft of teaching at Modesto Jr. College within, possibly providing opportunity to mentor.

**Outcomes**:

1. The Faculty Learning Community will grow: FLC members will remain committed to the FLC and mentor new faculty who join.
2. FLC members will see improved overall student learning and effectiveness of innovation or curriculum as a result of the FLC participation.
3. FLC members will also target disproportionately impacted groups in their discipline and devise a plan to facilitate equity amongst their students.
4. FLC members will increasingly employ an evidenced-based, scholarly approach to their teaching as informed by SoTL.
5. FLC members will present on FLC, including outcomes, to the campus

**Assessment**: The assessment for this Learning Community will take place individually and collectively. At the end of the year of study, faculty will have developed a portfolio demonstrating evidence of engagement with the SoTL texts, ie, of thoughtful consideration and application of concepts in SoTL and discussions by one’s FLC to one’s own course(s).

This may be accomplished by:

* 1. Literature review or summaries of key concepts or sections of SoTL texts and/or discussion related to these such as the Reading Apprenticeship Program.
  2. Course goals and Objective revisions in light of SoTL
  3. Course assessment revisions in light of SoTL
  4. Course design revisions in light of SoTL
  5. Syllabi revision in light of SoTL readings/discussions.
  6. Explanations and examples of in-class activities, exams, lessons, assessments informed by SoTL
  7. Explanations and examples of out-of class (at home) activities, exams, lessons, assessments informed by SoTL
  8. Timelines for implementing the above.

LC program assessment will take place via participant survey.

**Definitions**:

**Faculty Learning Community -** A *faculty learning community* (FLC) is a group of trans-disciplinary faculty of size 6-15 or more (8 to 12 is the recommended size) engaging in an active, collaborative, yearlong program with a curriculum about enhancing teaching and learning and with frequent seminars and activities that provide learning, development, transdisciplinarity, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and community building.

A participant in an FLC may select a focus course or project to try out innovations, assess resulting student learning, and prepare a course or project mini-portfolio to show the results; engage in triweekly seminars and some retreats; work with student associates; and present project results to the campus and at national conferences.

Evidence shows that FLCs increase faculty interest in teaching and learning and provide safety and support for faculty to investigate, attempt, assess, and adopt new (to them) methods. In the literature about student learning communities, the word "student" usually can be replaced by "faculty" and still make the same point, for example, "Learning community students generally fare better academically, socially, and personally than those in comparison groups." (from: <http://www.muohio.edu/FLC> )

**Structure:**

**Group size and composition:** The FLC will consist of a multidisciplinary group of 25-30 Faculty (full- and/or part-time) broken into three or four groups of 8 to 10 participants each.

**Readings**: Participating Faculty will select texts for study from the SoTL literature – a) pedagogy relevant to post-secondary (college) level; b) learning theory relevant to adult learners; and c) discipline-specific books or journals specific that apply general pedagogical principles to one’s own discipline. Each cohort group will decide on the texts for general pedagogy and learning theory as well as the pace of reading.

**Meetings**: Participants will meet every three weeks during each semester at “brown bag” meetings to discuss their self-assigned reading, and how to implement into one’s own teaching, classroom. Participants will also plan the Institute Day Breakout.

**Organization**: Each FLC will choose a rotating facilitator for each meeting; FLC members will determine specific goals and objectives within the larger objectives listed above. FLC members will focus on maintaining member commitment.

**Application/Selection Process:**

The first year probably needs to be by invitation as well as an open-application process to be facilitated by the Professional Development Committee if additional spots are open. Participants will be required to obtain divisional dean sign off (this ensures that faculty are getting credit for their efforts).

**Budget Request:**

Funding is requested for books, part-time faculty scholarships and food for the sessions.

Books: $ 400.00

Food: $1000.00

Scholarships for up to 4 part-time faculty: ($200/semester = $400/year) $1600.00

Total $3,000.00

**Sample Potential Texts:**

Ambrose, S. A. (2010). *How learning works : seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Blakemore, S.-J., & Frith, U. (2005). *The learning brain : lessons for education*. Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell.

Boyer, E. L. (1997). *Scholarship reconsidered : priorities of the professoriate*. [Princeton, N.J.]; San Francisco, Calif.: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching ; Jossey-Bass [distributor].

Dweck, C. S. (2000). *Self-theories : their role in motivation, personality, and development*. Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.

Fink, L. D. (2013). *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses* (2 edition). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Florence, Namulundah. *bell hooks’ Engaged Pedagogy: A Transgressive Education for Critical Consciousness*.

Freire, Paolo. *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paolo Freire

Leamnson, R. (1999). *Thinking About Teaching and Learning: Developing Habits of Learning with First Year College and University Students*. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus.

*Reading for Understanding: How Reading Apprenticeship Improves Disciplinary Learning in Secondary and College Classrooms*. (2012) (2 edition). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sleeter, Christine E. *Multicultural Education, Critical Pedagogy, and the Politics of Difference*,

Varela, F. J. (1991). *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience.* Cambridge: MIT.