Effective Practice for Faculty Development in Distance Education

Building on a systems approach to quality online education, here are a few tips for faculty development:

Don't Chase After "Faculty Buy-In"

Ask faculty what specific training they need. Start by encouraging DE faculty to rate themselves using the the OEI Online Course Design Standards Rubric. Consider this as important data collection! Via email, ask what they need now, as experienced online faculty, and what would have been helpful when they first started teaching online. Read carefully as you'll be learning levels of receptivity and need that can directly impact the necessary range of offerings. Offer FLEX for their participation.

Do regular, informal information gathering sessions to stay abreast of issues that might be related to needed areas of faculty development. Offer FLEX.

Keep in contact with other key shareholders in your institution who might identify problem areas that reflect needed training (Student Services)

Focus on Experience

Establish a menu of clustered offerings so faculty can identify their specific needs and skills. Offer workshops for NEW DE faculty and EXPERIENCED DE faculty.

Make workshops application based. Present basic "how-to-teach-online" topics as the "whys" within application-based sessions.

Include sessions related to the value of good course design as a way to improve quality of the course and also as a way to set up a course that is student AND instructor friendly and effective.

Have fun with titles of workshops. An attractive title can encourage participation.

Respect Faculty Knowledge

Offer sessions in online and blended formats. The experience is invaluable for online teachers! They learn by doing.

Give certifications/badges to faculty members who successfully complete an online learning module.

Recognize completers at an institution-wide level. Ask if they would like to be recognized as one of the "go-to" faculty in a particular cluster of topics.

Stay in touch with them!!! Learn how the training offerings can be improved and expanded.

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TEACHING IS A CRAFT. Good teachers have a "feel" about what they need to do if they are to translate their intentions and plans into positive learning outcomes.

"Talk-Backs" to Move Forward

Launch topical sessions with key online faculty members sharing from their expertise.

Make it worth their time — give them short, chunked experiences that they might use now.

Meaningful professional development provides opportunities to explore important questions about learning and teaching through a gradually unfolding inquiry process.

Innovative faculty see their classrooms as laboratories, sites for thoughtful learning experimentation and documentation, with the workshop providing opportunities for reflection and exchange.

Stay Relevant

Much of a professional's learning comes through experience: lessons learned day after day, year after year, then filed away. Then over the years best practices emerge and become an integral part of the job.

Regardless of the certification process, mastering classroom management to the online setting requires practice.

Faculty Development must be a learning community of practice. Serving the DE faculty by providing ongoing trans, research and relevant practices should be provided every semester.

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Feed them and they will come