A Faculty Learning Community (FLC) is a year-long cross-disciplinary group organized around a particular topic related to faculty life. Groups typically have a reading and discussion agenda and meet on a monthly basis. The FLC leader organizes meetings; plans the format, the details of the meeting situation, and goals for each meeting.

JOIN A COMMUNITY!

http://stthomasaa.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_dol44y9KRRDrLqR

The deadline to join is Wednesday, September 14, 2016.

Communities are open to all faculty, adjunct and full-time.

FLC TOPICS for 2016-17

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Questions about meeting times, dates or other aspects should be directed to the FLC leader. Click on leader's name to send an email.

Aligning Teaching and Research: The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)

At student/teaching-centered institutions such as ours, teaching and scholarship are naturally merged. As teacher-scholars, we integrate scholarship into our teaching and we update our teaching based on evidence of what works. Conducting SoTL formally is a way to better align our faculty development with our daily work as teacher-scholars.

As a result of this FLC, participants should improve their understanding of the following:

- definitions, standards, and functions of SoTL
- resources and strategies for integrating SoTL into one's professional development
- how to go about starting, designing, and publishing a SoTL project
- ethical/practical considerations for SoTL work
- applications of SoTL to teaching and learning

We encourage participants to think of a SoTL project they might want to pursue and to bring it to the FLC for discussion and support.

Led by: Uta Wolfe (Psychology)

Reading: Enhancing learning through the scholarship of teaching and learning: the challenges and joys of juggling by Kathleen McKinney

Schedule: Fall Semester - Tuesdays from 3:30-4:30 on 9/20, 10/11, 11/1, 11/22 (tentative), and 12/13.
Spring Semester - Dates/times TBD
Being Mortal

Americans are aging. By 2020, there will be more people age 65 or older than school-aged children in Minnesota. The next generations of older Minnesotans have significantly fewer children than prior generations –1.9 children per couple today compared to 3.2 children per couple in the 1950s. In addition, the proportion of older persons who are expected to be living alone (whether due to death of a spouse, divorce, or never having been married) is also projected to increase significantly for the boomer generation. This will create large societal changes as we try to adapt to this demographic shift.

Participants in this FLC will reflect on how aging is experienced during the final stages of life, and how it will impact our community. Here are some of the questions we will explore:

- How does the author describe the experience of diminishing physical and psychological capacities in the lives of the elderly?
- How do we experience these aspects of humanity in our own lives?
- The author describes very different cultural responses to aging. Is his description of the American response to the elderly consistent with your experiences?
- Today we have many options: Aging in place; moving in with son or daughter; senior housing; assisted living; and nursing homes. How do these differ from the point of view of the elderly? From point of view of adult children?
- What are the trade-offs for caring for an elderly parent at home? How does this impact the caretaker’s ability to fulfill other responsibilities - professional, familial, and personal? As a university how do we assist caretakers in fulfilling all these responsibilities?

Led by: Teresa Collett (School of Law)


Schedule: Fall Semester – Monday from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. on 9/19; 10/3; 10/17; 10/31; and 11/14. Spring Semester - TBD
Chairing a Department

In this Faculty Learning Community, new chairs will have an opportunity to learn the ropes, while more experienced chairs will be able to share problems and learn from peers. Topics include resource management, handling stress, communication, and evaluating faculty.

Led by: Andy Scheiber (English) and Cathy Cory (Theology)

Reading: The Essential Department Chair by Jeffrey Buller

Schedule: TBD

Contemplative Practices in Higher Education

This FLC will explore various topics in contemplative studies for application in the college classroom. Following a model developed by the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education, we will investigate a wide variety of practices including, but not limited to, the areas of stillness (meditation, centering); movement (labyrinth, yoga, dance); generative (visualization, Visio or Lectio Divina); relational (dialogue, storytelling, deep listening); creative (journaling, improvisation, arts); ritual (retreats, ceremony, spiritual/cultural); and activist (pilgrimage, volunteering, vigil). Meetings will include practice in a variety of mindfulness techniques, and will invite participants to develop their own personal practice outside the university. The objective is to develop and nurture a style of education that enables personal introspection, social awareness, student-directed learning, and a reflective and compassionate learning environment.

Led by: Vanessa Cornett-Murtada (Music)


Schedule: Fall Semester - TBD
Curiosity

This FLC will be an exploration of how we can unleash our students’ curiosity about the world around them (including our subject matter.) By the time they get to us, many of our students have gone through an educational system that encourages and rewards “the right answer”, but not necessarily asking good questions. How can we rekindle curiosity and questioning in our students and use it to help them reach our learning objectives? Moreover, how can we foster it in ourselves and our families to lead more fulfilling lives?

Led by: Brittany Nelson-Cheeseman (Engineering)

Readings: Curious by Ian Leslie

Schedule: Spring Semester - This FLC will be held in spring semester only. Interested faculty should pre-register for this spring FLC by September 14.

Intercultural Learning and Education Abroad Learning Community

In the past year, a limited number of interested St. Thomas faculty have had an opportunity to briefly, collaboratively reflect on their own and their students' intercultural learning resulting from study abroad programs. From national research, we know that faculty "cultural mentoring" facilitates students' ability to reflect on their own culture, communicate with local community members, and develop intercultural agility.

Participation in this community is open to all faculty. Current study abroad faculty directors are encouraged to participate in order to intentionally learn, share and reflect both before and after they take students abroad. Goals of this community include:

1. Consider intercultural theory and survey current instruments available to benchmark and measure development and change.
2. Share and learn about a broad range of practices, exercises and coaching techniques which will enhance students’ reflection and learning; consideration for student differentiation, based on student intercultural agility strengths and experiences will be considered.
3. Review study abroad course syllabi, course goals and itineraries for zones of "comfort, learning and panic"; considerations for the integrating intercultural agility content will be examined.

4. Construct and share study abroad course "cultural agility" modules.

5. Upon return, reflect, assess and measure new pedagogies; revise toolbox and syllabi for future study abroad programs

Led by: Deb Besser (Director, Center for Engineering Education) and Sarah Spencer (Director, Office of Study Abroad)

Reading: Student Learning Abroad: What Our Students Are Learning, What They're Not, and What We Can Do About It by Michael Vande Berg, R. Michael Paige and Kris Hemming Lou

Schedule: TBD

The deadline to join a community is Wednesday, September 14, 2016. Communities are open to all faculty, adjunct and full-time. Click to join a community!

Members of the Strategic Scholarship Faculty Learning Community: Ande Nesmith, Josh Layfield, Bryana French, Lesley Scibora, Afshan Ismat, Kari Zimmerman, and Kathleen Winters.
Strategic Scholarship

Participants will learn strategies to help enhance their scholarly productivity while simultaneously balancing other responsibilities. Facilitators will explore different strategies for scholarship productivity including increasing awareness and challenging resistance, strategic planning and goal setting, accountability, and work-life balance. This FLC specifically focuses on scholarly strategies that are in harmony with teaching and service, and it uses working meetings to apply these strategies to individual needs. Though all are welcome, this FLC is particularly useful for pre-tenure faculty in their 2nd year and beyond. In order to stay consistent with our strategies, we will meet every two weeks, through a combination of traditional and virtual meetings, during the academic year.

Led by:  Kari Zimmerman (History), Lesley Scibora (Health and Human Performance), and Bryana French (Graduate School of Professional Psychology)

Readings: Articles and book chapters focused on faculty scholarship and time-management will be provided throughout the semester; including Professors as Writers (Boice) and How to Write a Lot (Silvia).

Schedule: Fall Semester - Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. on 9/21, 10/5, 10/19, 11/2, 11/16, 11/30, and 12/14
Spring Semester - Dates/times TBD
Racial Justice Pedagogy and Intersectionality

This FLC will focus on creating anti-racist classrooms and an anti-racist campus climate through sharing related strategies, processes, and literature. We will also emphasize intersecting student/teacher identities and positionality, including gender identity, sexual orientation, social class, and ability. This FLC is open to ALL course contents and disciplines. The community also provides peer support for faculty taking the Inclusive Classroom Institute workshops and/or for those working toward certification.

Led by: Colin Martin (Biology), Bryana French (Graduate School of Professional Psychology), and Lucia Pawlowski (English)

Readings: TBD

Schedule: Fall Semester - Noon-1:15 PM on Sept 15 St. Paul; Oct 13 St. Paul; Nov 17 St. Paul; and Dec 6 Mpls
Spring Semester - TBD

Teaching Squares

With all the disparate things that faculty are expected to do, there is often little time left to discuss teaching and compare notes with colleagues from across our campus.

Modeled after successful programs at various community colleges, liberal arts colleges and research institutions, a teaching square consists of four faculty from different disciplines. After visiting one another’s classes, the four members meet for coffee or a meal to discuss, share and learn more about what they’ve observed.

The intention is not to critique one another’s teaching, but to gain exposure to different teaching approaches that might be useful in one’s own classes, and to provide the opportunity to discuss and learn more about those. Each square has faculty from four different disciplines so that participants are exposed to different teaching styles and techniques that may not be commonly used in their own discipline.

Participation in a teaching square is a self-focused experience of self-reflection and gathering of new ideas for one’s own teaching.
Led by: Melissa Loe (Mathematics) and Brittany Nelson-Cheeseman (Engineering)

Reading: Student Engagement Techniques by Elizabeth F. Barkley

Schedule: Fall Semester - This FLC meets in fall semester only. There will be an initial large group meeting at the start of the semester to share some ground rules, present details and resource book, and answer participants’ questions and divide up into squares. Additional meetings will include:

- Observations of each member in a square by the other members (probably 4 additional dates for each square for these observations)
- One square meeting for each group of four (over dinner/lunch/coffee)
- Large group meeting to debrief during last three weeks of semester

Tenured, Now What?

FLC for newly or recently tenured faculty that is about reflecting on the first 6 years and planning the future. Potential topics might include:

- Navigating the black hole of scholarship
- Reflecting on the last 6 years
- Creating goals for the next 6 years
- Redistributing time and energy
- Matching passions with projects
- Changing a course, staying the course, teaching a new course
- Facilitating Sabbatical prep (those who haven’t taken it)
- Staying happy or “falling back in love with your job”

Led by: Eric Fort (Chemistry) and Kari L. Fletcher (School of Social Work)

Reading: TBD

Schedule: Fall Semester - Fridays from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. on 9/16, 9/30, 10/21, 11/18, 12/9
Spring Semester - Dates/times TBD
“Participating in the Faculty Learning Communities was one of the most memorable experiences from the past year at UST.”

“It really does create small interdisciplinary communities that foster open thinking and discussion which greatly contributed to expending my horizons in the past year.”