2015-16 Faculty Learning Communities

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.

Interested in joining a FLC?
The deadline to join a community is Friday, September 18, 2015. Communities are open to all faculty, Adjunct and full-time. To join a community, follow this link: http://stthomasaa.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9mfPkgPrNBX5ttP.

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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:** Fall Semester – Wednesdays from 9:35 a.m. to 10:40 a.m. on Sept. 23, Oct. 14, Nov. 18, and Dec. 9.
Spring Semester - Dates/times TBD

Creating Meaningful Classroom Discussions

Although they sometimes seem serendipitous, effective class discussions are more often the result of careful preparation and planning. In this Faculty Learning Community, we’ll take a research-based approach to creating meaningful classroom interactions by exploring social norms -- such as civil attention, consolidation of responsibility, and differing definitions of participation -- within a college classroom. We’ll talk about what’s working in our own classes as we negotiate new norms and structure our classrooms to facilitate effective discussion.

**Led by:** Angela High-Pippert (Political Science)

**Readings:** From Discussion in the College Classroom: Getting Your Students Engaged and Participating in Person and Online by Jay R. Howard.

**Schedule:** Fall Semester – Wednesdays from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Sept. 23, Oct. 21, Nov. 18, and Dec. 9.
Spring Semester - Dates/times TBD
Creating Self-Regulated Learners

Description: In today's rapidly-changing world, teaching our students how to learn is more important than ever. How often do our students feel that they are prepared for an exam, and then find out otherwise? Or leave a class feeling that they haven't learned much, when the evidence indicates otherwise? How do we teach students to gain awareness of their learning, and to take ownership of it? This Faculty Learning Community is designed to explore these questions and to develop and implement strategies for helping our students become intentional, independent, self-directed learners.

Led by: Chip Small (Biology)


Schedule: Fall Semester - Mondays from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. on Sept. 21, Oct. 12, Nov. 2, Nov. 23, and Dec. 14.
            Spring Semester - Dates/times TBD

Embracing Our Role in the Global Church

At a time when Pope Francis is shifting Catholic attention to the Global South, current strategic planning speaks of UST as "embracing its role within the global church" and seeks to internationalize the university in various ways. This learning community will bring faculty together from various disciplines in order to examine the dynamics and the implication of tectonic shifts that are transforming Christianity in general, and Catholicism in particular, into an increasingly diverse and non-European world community. While enriching our teaching and scholarship, participants will also seek to identify ways in which the university might draw on global Christian networks, beginning with the Catholic Church itself, in its efforts to internationalize our academic curricula and campus culture.

Led by: Gerald Schlabach (Theology; Justice and Peace Studies); with Fr. Larry Snyder (Vice President for Mission)

Readings: The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity by Philip Jenkins; Pope Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975); and additional articles.

Schedule: Fall Semester – Fridays from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. on Sept. 25, Oct. 16, Nov. 6, Dec. 4, and Dec. 18.
           Spring Semester - similar schedule TBD
Increasing Student Success, Self-confidence, and Engagement Through Classroom Public Speaking Exercises

Chris Anson, the external consultant who teaches WAC at St. Thomas, founded a similar WAC initiative at his home institution. However, that initiative is called the Campus Writing & Speaking Program. He recently emphasized that he sees the two skills as mutually supportive. While writing is an advantageous skill, many of our students will enter careers in which confidence and cogent oral expression is equally or more critical to their success. Unfortunately, the way in which college courses generally incorporate public speaking is counterproductive. One large presentation is assigned at the end of the semester and student anxiety builds until the presentation and after which they wait for months until the next equally anxiety provoking presentation. Desensitization to fear requires regular experience with the fear provoking stimulus. Unsurprisingly, few people leave college confident in their ability to present material to groups of people.

This learning community will explore ways to increase public speaking opportunities in supportive learning environments that allow students to desensitize to their fear of speaking in front of people, increase their self-confidence, increase classroom engagement and learning, and increase their abilities to express themselves cogently and convincingly under pressure. Techniques to be explored will be low-stakes speaking assignments, team speaking assignments, ways in which speaking can serve deep learning through assuming the role of the teacher, ways in which to make speaking fun, methods to reduce student anxiety prior to and during speaking, etc. Guest speakers such as Carol Bruess have visited with us in the past and will hopefully do so again.

Led by:  Ryan Bremner (Psychology)

Schedule: Fall Semester – Tuesdays from noon to 1:00 p.m. on Sept. 29, Oct. 27, and Nov. 24.
Spring Semester - Dates/times TBD
Interested in joining a FLC?

The deadline to join a community is Friday, September 18, 2015. Communities are open to all faculty, Adjunct and full-time. Click to join a community!

“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 expanding my horizons in the past year.”

Introducing Race, Racism, and Racial Intersections in Predominantly White Classrooms

Introducing (recognizing) race and racism as topics in the classroom is essential if we are to fulfill our mission of preparing morally responsible leaders who can advance the common good in our increasingly diverse society. Our faculty face different challenges relating to their racialization in society. We can learn from each other by sharing experiences and our responses to those experiences. In this group faculty will engage with relevant reading materials and discussion to uncover salient racial issues present within our classes, and discuss the ways we can meaningfully engage our students in addressing these issues.

This FLC will not only benefit faculty who regularly engage with these topics but also help faculty recognize how they can infuse racial understanding into their teaching, which will be immensely important as our student body and our curriculum become more diverse. Discussion here will benefit ALL those who want to ensure that their classrooms are welcoming and truly inclusive, regardless of discipline or subject matter.

**Led by:** Consuelo Cavalieri (Graduate School of Professional Psychology), Stephen Brookfield (Leadership, Policy and Administration), and Rama Hart (Organization Learning and Development)

**Readings:** TBD

**Schedule:** TBD (contact facdevctr@stthomas.edu for details)
Strategic Scholarship

Strategic Scholarship Learning Community. In this FLC, 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. 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: How to Write A Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing by Paul Silvia. Additional articles will be utilized and provided for faculty.

Schedule: Fall Semester - FLC will tentatively meet Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. on Sept. 23, Oct. 7, Oct. 21, Nov. 4, Nov. 18, Dec. 2, and Dec. 16.
Spring Semester - Dates/times TBD

Survive & Thrive in the Pre-tenure Years

The pre-tenure years can be stressful. There’s much to learn about the institution, departmental history and policies, and how to balance all your obligations and still have a rewarding personal life. In this Faculty Learning Community, members will gain strategies for navigating through those challenging years through readings, discussion, and occasional guest speakers.

Led by: Ann Johnson (Psychology and Faculty Development) and Buffy Smith (Sociology & Criminal Justice)

Readings: Survive and Thrive: A Guide for Untenured Faculty by Wendy Crone

Schedule: Fall Semester – Wednesdays from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Sept. 30, Oct. 28, Nov. 18, and Dec. 2.
Spring Semester - Dates/times TBD
Teaching, Sharing, and Learning

Teaching is often considered a solitary endeavor. We rarely invite others to observe our classrooms — unless it’s mandatory. Yet much can be gained by engaging with our teaching colleagues, both inside and outside their classrooms. In this Faculty Learning Community we will meet to talk about our teaching challenges and solutions, and actively share pedagogical strategies, technology ideas, and methods. We will also create plans for visiting each others’ classrooms, and for using Faculty Development Open Classroom resources to gain knowledge about best teaching activities and how to apply them (e.g. Active Learning, Flipped Classroom, Clickers, Scratch-off IF-AT Forms, Team-based Learning, etc.). Through conversation and observation, we can share with others what works for us, optimizing learning in our classrooms.

Led by:  Brittany Nelson-Cheeseman (Engineering)

Schedule:  Fall Semester - Mondays from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Sept. 14, Oct. 26, and Dec. 7 plus 1-2 classroom observations to be arranged by participant.
Spring Semester - Dates/times TBD

Technology, Innovation and Design

This learning community is a forum for scholars with an interest at the intersection of technology, innovation, design, and entrepreneurship for exploring:

1. What is design and how does it create value?
2. How does design thinking foster innovation, collaboration, and learning in any organization?
3. How can design as a pedagogy prepare students for leadership in the 21st Century?

Led by:  Debasish Mallick (Operations and Supply Chain Management)

Reading:  The Design of Business: Why Design Thinking is the Next Competitive Advantage by Roger L. Martin

Schedule:  Fall and Spring Semester - Fridays from 11:50 a.m. to 12:50 p.m. on Sept. 18, Oct. 2, November 6, Dec. 4, Feb. 5, March 4, April 1, and May 6.