



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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Quality Teamwork: New Faculty Orientation

Last year Elizabethtown Community College experienced the largest influx of new instructors in its history; 20 percent of the full-time faculty for fall 1990 were new employees. A quality circle, created by the academic dean, centered on the problem of how to effectively orient and assimilate the large group of incoming new faculty.

After two hours, the group of busy bees, buzzing about how to orient new faculty, had collectively gathered enough nectar to make a good pot of honey. The quality circle "buzz groups" followed a six-step problem-solving process modeled on methods used by Japanese workforce teams to continually improve quality manufacturing processes:

1. Identify the problem.
2. Brainstorm solutions.
3. Analyze solutions.
4. Choose solutions by consensus.
5. Make a plan and implement.
6. Check back to assess solutions.

Because the focus was on implementing changes, whining and finger-pointing were replaced by constructive generation of creative ideas accepted through consensus of the whole group.

Plans were made for a collaborative orientation program, and individuals generously volunteered to work on specific parts of the agenda. It was fascinating to observe how much cooperation emerged from a process that empowered a group of individuals to function as a team. Members of the quality circle felt they owned the problem, as well as their proposed solutions, so that nothing was referred to another committee or department.

Much of the scheduling and coordinating of activities for the expanded orientation was completed by a faculty member who was being replaced (leaving the college because of her husband's military transfer), but who felt so strongly about making a contribution that she continued to work on the project even after her contract with the college had ended. Many other faculty and staff members donated large amounts of time and energy to the project, all of this activity falling outside any officially assigned college duties.



The result of this quality circle teamwork was a comprehensive orientation program presented for new faculty

during the first two weeks in August and just prior to the start of fall classes. Teamwork was stressed in the delivery as well as in the planning of the program. Orientation "buddies" acted as initial guides for each new faculty member; to better mesh personalities and interests, first-year mentors would be chosen later. The first orientation day provided time in the morning for new faculty to get keys, move into their offices, and meet their hallmates. In the afternoon, the college president and academic dean welcomed the new faculty; then individuals escorted small groups of them around campus, showing them the ropes, and introducing them to others at the college.

For the remainder of the first week and much of the second, new faculty attended seminar-style classes with topics presented by faculty members, counselors, librarians, division chairs, deans, support staff, and coordinators. Class sessions ranged from pragmatic instructions on filling out college forms to loftier discussions of teaching philosophies and testing pedagogies. New faculty were given opportunities to learn and ask questions about college mission and goals, service area characteristics, college credit and noncredit programs, typical student profiles, classroom policies and procedures, faculty rights and responsibilities, academic rights of students, syllabus and test construction, textbook selection, campus teaching/learning resources, counseling services, faculty evaluation methods, employee benefits, etc. Participants soon coined their own name for the training program: "ECC 101."

A number of social activities and icebreakers were included to help new faculty feel part of the college community. A "syllabi and salads" welcoming potluck luncheon gave all college employees a chance to meet and entertain the new instructors. A trivia scavenger hunt—similar to the one at San Diego City College as described in *Innovation Abstracts* (Volume XII, Number 17)—prompted new faculty to meet and discover hobbies and special interests of their colleagues. Example: What faculty member in the business management division collects baseball cards?

The high point of these social activities was a daylong tour of five counties in the college's service area. We borrowed a city school bus and driver, packed box lunches for a picnic at a local historic site, visited off-campus sites, traveled 200 miles of back country roads, and listened to a wealth of local anecdotes and tales colorfully narrated by our enthusiastic



tour guide—a faculty member and lifetime resident of the region. The tour oriented new faculty to the geographical service area, while the long bus ride provided them an extended period of time to talk and get to know one another.

By the middle of the second week, new faculty began attending other college and divisional meetings. Two faculty members, who were new the previous year, hosted a special no-administrators-present session for new faculty called "All the Things You Still Want to Know But Are Afraid to Ask." They addressed such areas as unwritten rules, hidden pitfalls, campus customs, strategies for overcoming obstacles, and other aspects of the campus culture that some individuals might not feel comfortable discussing candidly.

The last two days of the second week involved an overnight stay at a conference center in Lexington, Kentucky. There the 12 new ECC faculty joined 150 other new Kentucky community college employees and participated in the system-wide orientation to the University of Kentucky Community College System. Here they met the university president and community college chancellor, learned about system policies and procedures, attended sessions on various topics, and interacted with colleagues in their disciplines from other colleges.

On a follow-up assessment instrument, new faculty gave high evaluations to various components of the orientation program; their overall ratings were 62% excellent, 38% good, and 0% average, below average, or poor. They offered suggestions for improving the sessions (to be used by the team that plans next year's orientation program). The "buzz groups" have been so successful in implementing changes on our campus that we plan to drop a number of traditional standing committees and replace them with ad hoc quality circle teams created and empowered to solve specific problems.

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Celebrate Excellence: Recognition of Faculty and Staff Accomplishments

The Governor of Colorado proclaimed last February to be Community College Awareness Month, and the Community College of Aurora designed an "Excellence Week" to acknowledge and honor the many accomplishments of its faculty and staff. The week began with an *Employee Excellence Recognition* reception. Specially cast medallions were awarded to all previous and current Classified Employees of the Year and Faculty of the Year recipients, and each recipient was asked to wear the medallion for the entire week. We hoped that students, faculty, and staff would ask the recipients about their accomplishments.

The *Phi Theta Kappa Recognition* was held mid-week. The plaque commemorating the initiation of the local charter (established within the last year) and the plaques with signatures of the charter members were displayed.

The *Faculty/Program Recognition* was the finale. Classified Employees and Faculty of the Year were recognized once again; and the Outstanding Service Award, program awards, and divisional awards were presented. The highlight of the evening was faculty and staff sharing memories of people and experiences related to the college's history.

To sustain the week's momentum, a college bulletin board—designated the "Excellence Board"—was a visual display of the high caliber of commitment and excellence of the faculty and staff. All were encouraged to post their accomplishments. Many had published books and articles, had received special honors in connection with volunteer programs, and had been guest speakers at local and national conferences.

The response to the Excellence Week and Excellence Board was overwhelming, and the Excellence Board remains a permanent part of CCA's fixtures. Students, staff, and faculty still post accomplishments and stop to check the board for the most recent additions.

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