



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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The Faculty Learning Academy

At Pima Community College, we were challenged to develop a comprehensive program for all faculty that were new to the district, and we wanted it to be so attractive that even our returning faculty would ask to participate. We decided to establish a two-week Faculty Learning Academy. The purpose of the academy was to introduce all new faculty to the changing models of education and remind returning faculty of the challenges these changes would create. We did not intend to address housekeeping and orientation details during the academy experience.

The goal of the academy was to create a cohort of highly motivated faculty who would positively influence the culture of the college. For about \$3,700 per participant, the college developed a strong cohort, well-schooled in adult learning. This investment was clearly minimal when compared to the investment the district would make in each faculty member over an average 20-year teaching career.

The Process

A task force, including some recently hired faculty and administrators, met to generate ideas for the first academy. Meeting primarily on-line, the group identified four pre-screening questions for potential consultants. A listserv for professional development in higher education was the forum for soliciting responses to the pre-screening questions. The top five consultants were invited to the college for a morning panel presentation and afternoon individual interviews.

The Program

The new faculty were surveyed to identify their areas of expertise so that a flexible program could be designed to meet their specific needs. The rich diversity of the Southwest was a unifying theme; topics included the college mission, adult learning, classroom assessment strategies, technology in the classroom, and student perspectives. Consultants and participants modeled adult learning principles. The Columbia University Biosphere 2, a research and education center, provided an appropriate backdrop for demonstrations of active teaching strategies.

Administrators from the college's five campuses and

two district offices provided guided tours and luncheons. The new faculty met staff and learned about their duties at the college. A scavenger hunt introduced new faculty to key individuals at the central office. A new fitness and sports sciences faculty member provided activities for short physical breaks.

Follow-Up

Special activities, including lunch with the chancellor and a colloquium on Generation X students, have encouraged continued dialog between participants. Follow-up evaluations have demonstrated that this group is a cohesive cohort that has completed an exceptional year of achievements.

When asked to identify conference highlights, academy participants mentioned college responsiveness to the group's needs, the opportunity to visit all seven college sites, valuable resources (including books and articles), active and collaborative activities, academy organization and logistics, and development of a support network.

Future Academies

The success of the first academy resulted in the design of two academies for the next academic year—another two-week academy for new incoming faculty and a one-week Faculty Learning Community for 20 returning faculty. Volunteers from last year's academy and this year's community are being designated as mentors to new faculty. The legacy of the learning academy community is a dedicated faculty who will exert a positive influence on the college well into the new millennium.

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It's Hydraulics, Not Hyperbole! Machine, Not Metaphor!

Our Center for Advanced Productivity (Training for Business and Industry) contracted with an international auto manufacturer to provide 20 contact hours of instruction in basic grammar for interested employees. All of the employees who enrolled had taken some entry-level college courses, but they requested to begin with the basics—and they were very vocal about their negative experiences with grammar!

They studied basic sentences, subjects and verbs, subject-verb agreement, verb tense, sentence fragments, and run-on sentences; worked on reading comprehension skills; practiced the basic principles of paragraph writing; and created outlines. They brought their laptop computers to the final sessions and created memoranda and technical reports.

On the surface, the content and work sounded fairly traditional. However, students commented on how well the relatively unfamiliar content was being taught. The instructor asked how this class was different from other English classes the students had taken, and they identified what they believed to be the key factor: Workplace terminology was used in teaching traditional content. The instructor had designed the in-class practices to use language related to students' workplace experiences; they were reading and writing about familiar information—not a novel idea, but an often-overlooked strategy. Everyone feels more comfortable when working in a familiar setting and will make more progress when the fear of trying is removed.

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