

Executive Summary: Middlesex Community College Faculty Professional Development

Overview

In the fall 2013/spring 2014 calendar year Middlesex Community College offered 50 professional development workshops open to faculty and staff (the previous year we scheduled 46 workshops). In addition, each fall and spring, we have organized all-college Professional Days, which are regularly attended by approximately 300 people. Also, we support faculty and staff by providing funding for attending conferences, pursuing continuing education, and other professional development opportunities available outside the college.

Last year we allocated over \$66,000 to fund faculty requests for conference and coursework support in addition to funding provided to administrators and staff.

MCC's Office of Professional Development also supports innovative projects through our minigrant program. The minigrant application process is open to all faculty and staff. Proposals for minigrant projects, to be carried out over a semester or an academic year, are awarded for curriculum development or enhancement projects that directly affect student learning experiences. Many practices and programs that originated as minigrant projects have been fully implemented and integrated into classrooms and student service areas. All full-time faculty and professional staff members are eligible to participate in the minigrant program.

Last year professional development funding supported 43 faculty members on 21 minigrant projects in addition to funding provided to administrators and staff.

Faculty-Focused Professional Development

Professional Development opportunities specifically for faculty include our new full-time/part-time faculty orientations (offered at the start of the fall and spring semesters) and our full-time new faculty institutes (which run for an entire semester and meet each week). We also planned and coordinated two working meetings in spring 2014 for part-time faculty, to acquaint them with our work on using AAC&U VALUE rubrics to improve assessment and assignment redesign.

New Faculty Orientation

In the past two academic years, Middlesex Community College has offered a one-day New Faculty Orientation that has introduced over 40 new staff members to the college. When surveyed 85% of respondents said the orientation was "Effective" or "Somewhat Effective" (the remainder of the respondents skipped the question).

Most respondents replied with positive comments like

- "Thank you for putting on this training"
- "Excellent job getting us oriented Thank you"
- "Very good at conveying a warm welcome to new faculty!"

- “I ... appreciated the warm welcome and support from the presenters and Middlesex Community.”

The main complaints were that the amount of material covered did not allow for “in-depth coverage” of topics. Also, some respondents suggested the orientation should be offered sooner, and that it did not provide sufficient time for a guided tour of both of our campuses. Other critical comments included:

- “[T]he entire orientation is too long”
- “Great sessions, but for me too much, too late”
- “Think the Blackboard presentation should be covered more in depth”
- “Campus tour”

(NOTE: Since departments are still hiring part-time faculty up to the first day of classes, it is necessary to hold the orientation right before the semester begins.)

New Full-Time Faculty Institute

In the past two years, 26 new full-time faculty members have participated in a semester-long institute to better prepare them for teaching at Middlesex Community College. To accommodate their schedules, the faculty members are given reassigned time in order to enable them to participate in the institute. Each week, the new faculty members meet with members of the college community who can provide specialized knowledge related to faculty responsibilities. Topics covered by the presenters include advising, college service, classroom management, instructional technology and assessment strategies.

At the beginning of the spring 2014 New Faculty Institute, attending faculty members were given a pre-survey to gather information on what they saw as priorities in the content of the institute. This was intended to give them a voice in the shaping of the seminar. Informal, post-institute feedback has been positive about the value of the experience in integrating new full-time faculty to the college community.

Part-Time Faculty Working Meetings (spring 2014)

This past spring, the college hosted two required working meetings to acquaint part-time faculty with our work on using the AAC&U VALUE rubrics to promote high-impact practices in assessment and assignment redesign. Collectively, over two hundred faculty attended the two meetings. One hundred and eighty-one part-time faculty members responded to the post-meeting survey. In response to the statement, “I see the relevance of the VALUE rubrics to assignment design in my courses,” 36.93% said “strongly agree” and 51.70% said “agree.” In addition, in response to the statement, “I gained a beginning level of expertise applying a set of criteria from one of three nationally-recognized rubrics (AAC&U’s Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, or Creative Thinking VALUE rubrics) to identify evidence of the development of MCC’s Critical Thinking Institutional Student Learning Outcome (ISLO) as represented in a piece of student work,” 42.78% said “strongly agree” and 53% said “agree.”

Most of the individual respondent comments were positive. Several praised the efforts of the faculty facilitators that led the session and the experience itself:

- “Excellent exercise”

- "The small group discussion were helpful--good moderators"
- "Thank you for a productive workshop."

Complaints tended to focus on details about the evening and the scheduling of it:

- "Wasn't told about dinner."
- "It would have been helpful to know that the comments before the sessions were important to attend. ie be here @ 5:30!"
- "Don't schedule the last week of semester."

Future Developments

This semester, we have 52 professional development workshops planned for the fall alone. We intend to have a similar number of offerings for the spring, thus doubling the amount of professional development workshops offered from last year. We will continue to provide professional development funding for conferences, coursework, and minigrant projects.