

Transcript - 2022 INCLUSIVE Summit: Disciplinary Matters Administrative and Faculty Support Session

7/13/22

MIKE BROKES: Hello, everyone. Welcome to the disciplinary breakout session portion of the summit. This session specifically is for administrative and faculty support staff. So hopefully that applies in one way or multiple ways to each of you. Just letting a couple people in out of the waiting room.

My name is Mike Brokes. I am a program manager at APLU. And so I work on a lot of different initiatives, primarily related to bringing cohorts of faculty together across institutions for a common purpose.

So I'll talk today a little bit about Disciplinary Community of Practice Initiative that we led-- that I helped to manage and facilitate during the fall 2021, spring 2022 semesters, just as an example of how to bring faculty together and some best practices for doing that.

But yeah, I tend to work with faculty across institutions. And as we'll talk about, I'm interested in learning more about what each of your roles are in terms of how you interact with faculty and specifically groups of faculty.

But I'm going to share my screen briefly at first. Let's see. Can everyone see the first slide here? OK, great. I saw a thumbs up. I appreciate that. Yeah, so the title for this discussion, Practical Approaches for Bringing Faculty Together, is meant to be as broad as it sounds.

I'm going to approach it and offer some suggestions specifically for managing or leading a faculty community of practice or a faculty learning group. So a more sustained effort over time. But I hope that what I share is equally applicable for those of you who work-- who might have more short-term initiatives like just convening a search committee or convening a curricular change committee of some kind.

So in terms of an overview of what I want to talk about and what I want to learn from others here, I'd like to learn about who we are, what our roles are, and who we support and how we support faculty.

I'll talk about some approaches that I've learned are practical for successfully managing faculty groups or communities. Like I said, I'm going to offer a case study. I'll spend most of my presentation time talking about the Communities of Practice Initiative that we led and what we learned from that.

And then at the end, I'd like to have another discussion about maybe how that community of practice framework might be applicable or adaptable to the ways in which you work with faculty and your faculty development goals, and also talk about-- I don't want this to be a one way conversation either. I definitely would like to learn from you all what approaches to bringing people together are helpful for you and what you've found that you've struggled with.

So just to start out with, I think we have a pretty small group. We have less than 15 people. So rather than just ask everyone to-- sorry about that. Rather than ask everyone to share in the chat what they do, I think we could just quickly have everyone introduce themselves and maybe just say quickly what your role is and the ways in which you work with and support faculty.

So let's see. Alexandra, you're at the top left of my screen, so I'll start with, if you wouldn't mind sharing what your role is, what institution or organization you work at, and how you interact with faculty. I think you're muted.

ALEXANDRA PICKETT: Sorry about that. Just saying hey to everybody. It's really nice to be here. Nice to meet you, Mike and everybody else. I am Alexandra Pickett. I'm the director of online teaching for the State University of New York at the system level. I work with 64 institutions across the state of New York and have led faculty development and instructional design and the community of practice of online teaching practitioners that include instructional designers, faculty, and campuses for more than 20 years.

So I've been doing this for a while. I think we're pretty good at community building. My interest today is in helping to build awareness and understand practices in diversity, equity, and inclusion.

I'm working on a project right now to-- multi-institutional project outside of-- including SUNY, but also including 46 other institutions outside of SUNY, to take a look at inclusive teaching practices, adapt them for online, and then map them to all of the main online course quality rubrics that are out there, including OSCQR, which is the

rubric that I've developed for SUNY. So, yeah, I'm happy to be here.

Nice to meet everybody.

MIKE BROKES: Thanks, Alexandra. And now that more people are joining, I think it probably is not practical to have everyone introduce themselves. But I would love if a couple more people want to volunteer to just say where you work and how you interact with faculty or your responsibilities in terms of bringing faculty groups together. Would love to hear from a few more people to get a sense of the range of different roles.

PENNY EDWARDS: I'll be happy to introduce myself.

MIKE BROKES: Sure. Thanks, Penny.

PENNY EDWARDS: I am Penny Edwards. And I am a former faculty member in higher education over the last 15 years and have been dabbling in faculty development work for the last eight years.

And I've transitioned from higher education into the academic medicine sphere, where I currently serve as faculty development program manager, working with our basic sciences and clinical faculty at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine in Greenville, South Carolina.

And so one of the projects that we are working on right now is working with our physician faculty and our basic sciences faculty in identifying bias within their instructional materials across the range of our medical school curriculum.

And so we've been creating computer-based training modules covering a number of different areas of bias so that these folks can identify concerns and issues within their instructional materials and hopefully make some changes for that to improve opportunities there for our medical learners. It's very nice to be here today, so I'll let someone else speak if they wish to do so.

MIKE BROKES: Thanks, Penny. That's really interesting. Maybe one more person. Would you like to share where you work and how you are involved in faculty development or faculty group efforts?

OK. Well, feel free to, if you'd like to in the chat, share your role, where you work, and then how you interact with faculty, just those three brief things. I think it would be interesting to get a sense, again, of the range of everyone's responsibilities in terms of getting faculty together to work on initiatives that are either directly related or indirectly related to their teaching of students.

I'm going to share my screen again. And I'm just going to share a couple of quick approaches that I think are effective for bringing faculty together. And then, again, share a case study that kind of contextualizes those approaches in terms of a community that I, along with a few other organizational partners, initiated. So I'll say a little bit more about that as well.

OK. So just four quick approaches before I talk specifically about the disciplinary community of practice effort and what we learned from that. And that led to these conclusions. So it seems clear to me that a specific person should be responsible for maintaining or guiding any kind of effort to bring faculty together. That seems obvious, but it should be accounted for.

This is something that takes time. It is not just scheduling a monthly meeting, and then having people show up to that meeting and trying to pick up where they left off. It should be a more sustained effort, a more carefully planned effort. And the person whose time that is-- everyone else should realize that that work takes time and concerted effort.

The onboarding process is really important. So faculty should know what it is they're getting involved in. Sometimes they'll be joining a community voluntarily or a certain effort. Other times, they get assigned.

But in any case, it should be really clear what the purpose of the effort is and why they can benefit from it. So just contextualizing it for how to make it work or how they can make it work for them so that it doesn't seem like something extra that they're doing, something that can actually help their work.

It's important to create space for people who have common interests or are working on common problems. So again, even if people are being voluntold to a certain degree, it's important to make that value proposition, I think, as an administrator to help faculty members understand why this work is being done, how it affects them, and the larger purpose that it's contributing to, which is something that they have an interest in, they have a stake in.

And then putting as much effort into keeping the community going as getting it off the ground. Definitely something we learned when developing and sustaining our communities. It's important to get the framing and your outcomes. All that prework is really important.

But just conscious messaging and communication and coordination throughout the duration of whatever community that you're working with is just as important as the initiation or the planning stage.

It's important to showcase the work and voices of your group members. So if you have faculty participating in a monthly meeting or any regularly occurring discussion group, inviting members to-- inviting those faculty members to present something rather than feeling that you, as the administrator, or administrative leader, or support person, need to be the one facilitating the meeting all the time.

So just getting people involved that way, having them take stake in the running of the group rather than just the participating in it more passively. And engaging the most enthusiastic participants and tagging them to be community leaders as well.

Designing for evolution. This is a term from Etienne Wenger, who has done a lot of research on communities of practice. Just knowing that the concerns and the interests of the group will change over time. I think this is true, even for a community built around a very definite purpose.

But the way that people think about what's important to discuss and what needs to come-- what deliverables or solutions need to come out of the group, that may change over time. And the communities should be structured to allow for that.

Plan for the sharing but not just the sharing but also the development and building of knowledge. So I think an important feature of a community of practice is not only that knowledge is being shared from one person to another, but that people are working together as practitioners to actually develop something new, new knowledge, and actually creating that, rather than just more passive sharing of resources.

And also designed for learning to be nonhierarchical. So everyone should be able to learn from everyone. So it should not just be a one-way conversation of someone saying, this is how-- just as one example.

These are some pedagogical practices that you need to put into place, or this is how you use this particular type of adaptive courseware. So definitely making space for administrators to learn from faculty and faculty to learn of different-- at different levels to learn from one another.

And the final approach that I wanted to share upfront is embedding action into conversation. So I think we probably have all been a part of a series of meetings where a discussion happens during on a Tuesday at 2:00 PM, and then the next time the

meeting happens, no one has done anything. And the conversation just-- people just try to remember where the conversation left off the last time. So I think it's really important to design these kinds of groups to allow for solution-- to make them solution-oriented rather than just discussion-oriented. So ideally, a community would be moving from the mere discussion of different ideas or requirements to an active mode of solving the problem. And that can be built into the purpose of the community from the start.

Creating an organized way of capturing and sharing examples and resources. So I'll talk a little bit more about this. But I think it's really important to have a repository of shared resources and a way for people to extend conversations beyond just the whatever live meeting time you might have.

So whether it's an LLMs site, or discussion forum, or just an email listserv. And then just some organized way of calling and sharing and making available the resources that get shared and developed as part of the discussions.

So I will move on to talk a little bit more specifically about the disciplinary communities of practice project and how we put these principles into practice with it. But I'm curious if anyone has questions at this stage about any of the approaches or if anyone wants to share a kind of approach to bringing people together that has worked really well for them. Just catching up with the chat as well.

It looks like we have several instructional designers here, which is great. Person responsible for making different campus units work in professional development. People's roles change over time.

Yeah, it's a very interesting collection of roles. We have people who work at one specific institution or probably in one specific department. So all the way from that to-- Alexandra shared that she works at a university system with faculty across different universities. So this will look a lot different for a lot of us. But hopefully there are some common principles and suggestions here that you'll find useful.

So I'd like to talk a little bit about the Disciplinary Community Practice Initiative that APLU designed and facilitated over the fall 2021 and spring 2022 semesters, along with some of our organizational partners at Achieving the Dream, the Online Learning Consortium, and the Every Learner Everywhere network.

So I'll talk a little bit about what our communities-- what ours were designed around, but a couple of things that-- a couple of guiding principles for us in terms of defining what a

community of practice meant to us and why it was important. First, that it's a shared domain of interest. So ours were not required for anyone. It was just a voluntary invitation for people from across institutions, both two- and four-year to join. We were committed to engaging in joint activities and discussions, helping each other and sharing information and resources. And also members of the community were practitioners, so we developed shared practices. Like I said, we developed knowledge in addition to just having flatter conversations about existing practices.

So our colleague Kristin Ziska Strange is an instructional designer. She's the Director of Faculty Development at Tufts University and also a consultant for the Online Learning Consortium. So we worked closely with Krys.

And just a quote that I really like from her is that a community of practice essentially divides the work of value evaluation and helps you focus on what you need. There are too many places to find information. And it's too much to try to determine the value. So I think a community of practice helps people to adjudicate. It helps people get a curated exposure to a variety of approaches and resources and helps them to quickly evaluate and adjudicate which ones are useful for them and which ones they can adapt to be useful for them. There's just so much out there. So it could be really helpful to be a part of a community like this to give yourself a chance at digesting and figuring out what works for you.

So the community of practice project that we ran invited both two- and four-year participants. And the topic-- or generally speaking, the initiative had to do with effectively leveraging digital learning tools and centering student equity within a disciplinary context.

So we had monthly live sessions in fall 2021 and spring 2022. We also had a dedicated asynchronous space. In our case, it was a Canvas course site, where we shared resources. We uploaded the recordings from all the Zoom sessions in case people were not able to attend the live sessions.

We had a digging deeper section with additional research and resources related to each one of the live session topics. So it was just a way of extending the conversation and a place people could go to find everything that was discussed and developed.

The sessions focused on instruction in writing, math, chemistry, and biology specifically. So we had those four subcommunities. And participants met both as a full

group, as well as in the disciplinary breakout groups as part of the structure of the live sessions.

And yeah, we wanted to provide structure and introduce important concepts while also empowering participants to take ownership of discussion topics. So we certainly did not want, as the organizations offering and facilitating these communities, to be the ones telling faculty members what they needed to do or what it would be good for them to do.

We wanted it equally to be an opportunity for us to learn from them and to help their work inform ours and the resources that we create and offer. So yeah, they were designed to encourage professional development, mentorship, and support for innovation and instruction.

Keeping the theme in mind of designing for evolution, we didn't think it made sense to have specifically defined outcomes for our community of practice. So instead, we settled on the idea of creating themes and essential questions with the realization that priorities and what people wanted to discuss and work on might adapt and shift over time.

So the overarching theme for fall 2021 was getting to know our students, increasing engagement in digital learning environments. In spring 2022, it was developing critical engagement in and across our disciplines.

Some underlying themes that are essential to all of the work that we do within the Every Learner Everywhere network. Evidence-based teaching practices, centering equity and course design and pedagogy, and effectively leveraging a courseware and educational technologies.

And a few essential questions that we started with as we built this out. How did we inhabit a digital space that promotes equity and inclusion in our disciplines, and that facilitates the equitable achievement of learning outcomes? And how do we create a digital learning space that invites interaction, collaboration, and belonging?

Just a quick overview of the six monthly live sessions that we had. The first one was equitizing your syllabi. The second was assessing students with care. And the third was integrating self-awareness, self-reflection, and transparency. If any of you attended the last session, you heard a lot of discussion about metacognition, which was a big part of that session.

In spring 2022, we had a session focused on sharing discipline-specific resources for building critical engagement. Implementing open pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching practices. Achieving the Dream has a really wonderful matrix of culturally responsive teaching and open pedagogy. That was an exceptional tool and was a really good driver of discussion in that session. And then supporting instructors and students as agents of change.

I wanted to share a couple of visuals of the Canvas site that we used, our asynchronous space, that served as a landing page for participants. So we built a playbook together with the participants. And we also had a community library where we would pull resources out of the chat that people would share from the live sessions. And then people could also go into these documents offline or outside of the synchronous sessions and add resources to the chat as well.

During the sessions, we would use tools to, like I was saying earlier, move from conversation to action. So we use Google Docs a lot every session. And we also use Miro boards to ensure that we were capturing the ideas and resources that people were sharing, instead of just talking about those things and forgetting about them.

And so the Canvas site was also really useful for storing these collaborative documents that people could go back into and continue to add to after the live sessions. And like I said, for each of the live sessions, we also had a Digging Deeper page.

So if there was a session about assessing students with care, we would have-- on that page, we would share six or seven different articles and other resources that for we didn't have time to cover during the session, but offer different perspectives and different approaches in those areas, which I think people found useful.

We were fortunate to be able to hire eight faculty facilitators. So for each of our four subcommunities, we had one faculty member from a two-year college and one faculty member from a four-year college. So it was great to have their expertise in running those discipline-specific breakout sessions.

And it was also great to have representation from both kinds from just a wide range of institutions so that all of our participants, who also were from a range of institutions, felt as if they were, that they belonged, that their concerns were being represented. So, initially, we had in mind that the facilitator-- we had these two-hour monthly live sessions. And a portion of those sessions would be dedicated to discipline-specific breakout rooms. But the other portion would just be whole-group sessions.

So our initial plan was just that the facilitators would lead the discussions during the discipline-specific sessions. But we quickly found that they were really valuable as presenters and exemplars in the whole group sessions as well. So one of our lessons learned for sure was just to involve our experts even more, have them be even more engaged throughout our programming.

So one quote from Dr. Elizabeth Sanders Lopez, who was one of our writing community facilitators. She said, "The energy was very good. The structure of the sessions worked well for focused idea-- focused conversation and cross-disciplinary idea generation." And finally, a couple of our specific takeaways, I think what we learned from doing this. First, that closer-- like I was just saying, closer collaboration with and integration of faculty facilitators enriched our session topics and made the discussions more substantive for sure.

The session design and structure was a great fit for our participants, that you might be convening communities for all sorts of different purposes. So what works for those groups might be different. But for us, the monthly two-hour live sessions seemed like the right interval.

And the structure of each session was we would start with a short presentation of an important idea or concept, like equitizing your syllabus or assessing students with care. We would have our faculty facilitators. Two or three of them would share an example or two of something that they do in their classroom that embodies that principle.

Then we would move into breakout rooms to discuss that idea on a more disciplined-specific level, like, what does it look like in a math classroom specifically or a biology classroom specifically? And then we would come back and do cross-disciplinary share-outs and think about how what the math group talked about, for example, could be applicable to writing instruction.

Another learning was that we could increase engagement and attendance with a more intentional action planning process. So we did fall into the syndrome of-- we want people to show up and work hard during the session. But we could have given them more to work on and consider and bring back to the next session to create more of a sense of continuity.

I think that way-- I think we could have ended up farther along had we given homework assignments and had people work on specific things throughout the semester, and then

come back and share their progress. I think that could have been an interesting feature that we would definitely take advantage of the next time. And then making time during sessions for informal and low-stakes conversation. We had a lot of participants and not a lot of time. And we had a lot of content we wanted to cover.

But I think it was just-- I think it is important to spend the first 10 or 15 minutes of a group meeting like this just asking how people are doing, what they're thinking about, what they're working on in a more low stakes way before diving right into the substance of what the meeting is about. I think that would have helped people to get to know each other a little bit better and maybe be a little bit more comfortable sharing throughout the sessions.

And we also felt that our takeaways from each session could be shared more broadly. So we did a really good job of sharing the things that we talked about in the community with the community itself. So just sharing back what was talked about.

But I think we could have done a better job. And we're still working on this, too, but developing resources, sharing that knowledge outside of those communities with the field more broadly. So I think that's definitely something to think about as well when you're convening a group like this.

So I'm interested in hearing from some of you just to learn a little bit more about what you found to be successful in bringing faculty together. I think we can all think of unsuccessful initiatives, or things that we've struggled with, or the fact that we've struggled to get faculty buy-in for.

So I would love to hear those examples, too. I think those would be just as useful as the success stories. And then if there are any features of the community of practice model that I sort of gave an overview of that you think might be applicable to or adaptable for the work that you are currently doing or might have upcoming with faculty members. So I'm going to stop sharing my screen, unless anyone would like me to go back to a particular slide. And yeah, would love to hear from. I guess we can start with the first question that I had on that slide. Are there any practices, approaches, strategies that you found to be particularly effective when you're bringing faculty together for a common purpose?

OK. Thanks, Shelly. Yeah, providing digital certificates or badges for completion. Yeah, so when you can't pay faculty, which we often don't have the ability to do, yeah, offering

digital badges as part of their professional development, we found that that has been useful as well. So thank you for sharing that. Alexandra.

ALEXANDRA PICKETT: So this is interesting, that Shelly brought up badges. Because I hadn't really thought about it in the context of the conversation we were having. But it's totally in there.

And one of the things that we have done is to create a badging ecosystem that codifies our community of practice in terms of roles and in terms of contributions to the engagement of the community and the role that is played, and then also skills and what someone brings as part of their role to the community.

And so often one thinks of badges as really a souped up certificate from a workshop or for attending something. But we've really put a lot of effort into using it as a way to incentivize behaviors in a community of practice. So it's much broader. That's why I call it an ecosystem.

So we actually, organically, over years, developed roles of types of people in our community of practice. So we have people who are novices. And our community of practice includes not just faculty in all disciplines but also instructional designers, librarians, technologists, administrators, anyone who has really anything to do with online teaching and learning.

So that grew organically over years. And then at a certain point, we developed a system to have people self-select into roles in the community of practice from interested to researchers. And there's a few in between.

And they can self-select so that even someone who is very experienced instructional designer, let's say, could go in the interested role if that's the level of commitment that they could have for the community. So they're basically choosing their level of commitment by their role.

And then we tailored activities to the roles and communications to those roles and resources and tools to the rolls. And like you said, we do a lot of the stuff that you mentioned, like creating a network for asynchronous interaction after events, or in between activities or initiatives, or whatever.

And we create additional opportunities to demonstrate your commitment to the community. So you can volunteer for different things. And you earn badges for those. And so there's participation. There's leadership. There's engagement badges. There's speaking badges.

And we do a lot of activities to showcase people within the community. So that's one of the strategies I would recommend, is that within your community, you have everyone from novices to masters and everything in between. And at any point, anyone can learn from someone who knows more and helps someone who knows less, no matter what point you're in, even if you're a novice. So we provide a forum and a platform for people to share what they essentially with the larger community and to showcase what they're doing.

And we have a number of programs that we've developed over time that support and facilitate that and opportunities for volunteering and expressing-- many ways of expressing your contribution to the community based on how much you want to do. So no one's obliged to do everything or to do anything really. But we have ways to recognize. And that incentivizes a sense of belonging and community and contribution. And it also helps everyone else in the community to see what's possible and to be able to identify other individuals and where they are, not just in terms of experience and skills and expertise but what they're contributing to the community as a whole, so--

MIKE BROKES: That's fantastic. It sounds like you have a really mature community. I love the idea of defining roles and then having people identify their level of commitment to those roles and expertise too.

ALEXANDRA PICKETT: So, Mike, one of the things that we built into our ecosystem is the opportunity to include in our community of practice people who are outside of SUNY. So I have a role for friends of SUNY. And I just popped a link in the chat. And if anyone's interested, you can join as a friend of SUNY and then become part of my group.

MIKE BROKES: That's great. And I love what you said also about letting people determine their level of involvement and offering various incentives for greater levels of participation. I mean, I know that a lot of the research on community of practice-- communities of practice says that you definitely have to build for varying levels of involvement and commitment.

So from just the person who wants to just attend the sessions but not participate versus someone who wants to present on different topics, et cetera. I think that's really important to sustaining and building engagement in a community. Thank you.

I'm wondering, so if anyone else has an example of a successful community and a specific things that they do to build and sustain it, would love to hear those examples.

But if you have an example of something that's been unsuccessful and why you think it might have been unsuccessful. I'd be really interested in hearing about that, too, in the few minutes that we have left.

I'm also curious. So I guess I'll pose this question as well. In terms of the features that I talked about with the disciplinary communities of practice and also the ones that Alexandra talked about with her work at SUNY, I'm curious if any of you have started to think about something that you might be able to take up, or that you might be able to adapt or repurpose for an initiative that you might be working on.

So just curious if anyone has started thinking in that direction or if there's anything that stuck out to you that you might find useful.

OK. Well, we'll make sure to make the slide deck that I used and the links that people have shared in the chat. I apologize that I probably haven't been able to keep up with everything that's been shared in the chat. But I'll make sure to save it. And we'll make sure to share these resources back with you.

Definitely get in touch with me if you have any questions about anything or any ideas that you want to explore. But other than that, thank you for attending this session. Want to remind folks that our final session of the day is at 3:00 PM Eastern time. It's an instructional design-led session called designing for equity.

And at the end of that session, we'll have closing remarks, a very short set of closing remarks from Jessica Williams, who is the director of the Every Learner Everywhere network. And then at 4 o'clock, that's when we will share a survey in the chat. And you'll want to complete that survey to earn your digital badge for attending the summit today and be entered to potentially win a \$100 and a \$50 gift card.

So thank you for sticking around this far. Hope you'll attend the final session as well and hope you found this to be useful. And thank you very much. We'll see you again soon.