

FACULTY ENGAGEMENT IN TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

AN INTERACTIVE PRESENTATION

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Colleges recognized nationally for outstanding student results, such as many Aspen Prize winners and Achieving the Dream colleges, provide well designed faculty development opportunities built on the same principles and standards as the curriculum provided to students. All are learners, and colleges must attend to faculty learning as well as student learning.

How then can colleges best create and support a faculty community focused on Transformative Learning, concerned with what students ought to learn, in what sequence, and how they will best achieve that learning?

Mastering teaching in a college committed to Transformative Learning can involve a paradigm shift. Formal faculty development for new and continuing faculty proves critical to ensuring that faculty are experts in facilitating learning in their disciplines and the broader curriculum. If good teaching that fosters Transformative Learning is to be anything other than random, then institutional policies must deliberately support the development of teachers.

Scenarios Learning is one strategy for engaging faculty in supporting Transformative Learning. Scenarios Learning uses a contextual, story-based, team learning approach in which a group of faculty participate in an on-line (or in-person) scenario exploring issues that real faculty face in real classrooms with real students every day. Each Scenario offers a set of learning opportunities. After reviewing the Scenario and related resources individually, faculty meet online to discuss and apply what was learned, fostering collaboration and shared learning.

The fit between Transformative Learning and Learning Scenarios is remarkable. The content and the collaborative, engaging process of Scenarios frequently creates those same internal, transformative, a-ha moments of understanding and adjustment in faculty learners that we want in student learners. Student Transformative Learning requires them to focus on creating internal change rather than just demonstrating content mastery. Scenarios Learning requires faculty to go beyond discipline-specific skills and expand their process and relationship skills in guiding student learning.

Scenarios Learning is:

- grounded in proven learning theory, modeling good pedagogy, and leveraging the power of story, case studies, simulation and problem-based learning to provide strategies for immediate classroom application.
- a series of integrated learning experiences with embedded activities and resources connecting the Scenario to real world teaching and learning.
- based on respect for faculty as professionals; a model of collaboration as faculty learn together, creating shared experiences that strengthen professional bonds; Scenarios deal with the grey areas where there is no right answer but multiple points of view.

- available, accessible, convenient, and cost effective for colleges, making it easy to sustain for all faculty over the years, rather than a program being a series of ad-hoc events impacting limited numbers of faculty.

Professional development efforts must focus on strategies for assisting faculty to move beyond their comfort zones of disciplinary expertise to facilitators of Transformative Learning. The Scenarios Learning approach is especially effective in fostering collaboration as participants explore a story of real teaching and learning and faculty roles in improving student learning and completion at their college.

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