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Inclusive Faculty Development at Louisiana State University

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From the Delphi Project database of

Example Best Practices to Support Non-Tenure-Track Faculty

- ✓ Individualized Course Development Consultations
- ✓ Targeted Outreach & Intentional Timing
- ✓ Faculty-to-Faculty and Student-to-Faculty Interaction Spaces
- ✓ Monetary Support & Performance Recognition

A primary institutional goal at Louisiana State University (LSU) is to mold students into critical thinkers and effective communicators. This desire drove the creation of a high-impact program called Communication across the Curriculum (CxC). CxC was created to serve the mission of advancing the communication skills of all undergraduate students. CxC also intentionally sets the tone for a new campus culture of tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty collaboration. In order to bring this goal to fruition, LSU set a distinct foundational principle in place: collaboration among, and support for, all undergraduate teaching faculty irrespective of rank, position, or assignment. LSU adopted a for-faculty-by-faculty approach, ensuring all faculty have the chance to create, contribute to, and benefit from pedagogical programming that supports comprehensive disciplinary and cross-disciplinary high-impact teaching and learning. Now an institutionalized program, LSU CxC hopes to serve as a model for prioritizing faculty support, for all faculty including non-tenure-track, to ensure student success.

Individualized Course Development Consultations

With the primary institutional goal in mind, CxC created a hallmark program referred to as Certified Communication-Intensive Courses (C-I). C-I courses embark on a pedagogy that promotes deeper learning of course content while also providing advanced instruction on effective, discipline-specific communication skills. Faculty are able to work with both tenure-track and non-tenure-track CxC teaching consultants to develop a C-I course plan and clearly articulate assignments that meet their learning outcomes. All courses that desire a C-I label must include the following communication-intensive practices:

- Engage students in the use of informal communication for learning and formal communication for sharing ideas publicly.
- Teach and assess proper communication techniques throughout the course.
- Emphasize at least 2 of 4 modes of communication (written, spoken, visual, or technological).
- Focus on genres and audiences appropriate to the discipline or profession.
- Use feedback loops to advance communication skills.
- Allocate at least 40% of course grade to communication-based work.
- Uphold ethical and professional standards for all class work.

Students enrolled in C-I classes must complete a separate C-I course evaluation. That evaluation can be used as evidence of teaching excellence in annual performance reviews/reports, giving non-tenure-track faculty the chance to advance their teaching portfolios. Additionally, working with CxC teaching consultants gives non-tenure-track faculty the opportunity to leverage the robust database of instructional ideas and evidence-based practices to advance one's specific teaching goals and specific learning outcomes.

Faculty-to-Faculty and Student-to-Faculty Interaction Spaces

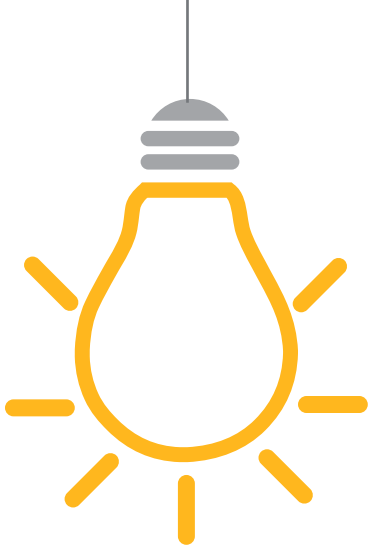
CxC offers four physical studios meant to foster student-to-faculty collaboration and faculty-to-faculty collaboration around communication. The four studios located across campus house contemporary communication-intensive learning resources, technologies, and trainings. Examples of offerings include sound booth recording, 3-D printing and scanning, and writing consultations. Both tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty are encouraged to utilize this space for office hours to connect students with campus resources designed to help ensure the larger institutional goal is met. These studios house innovative teaching and learning projects, such as Wikipedia EDU, the LSU Experimental Podcast, and TEDxLSU.

Physical space for collaborative purposes especially benefits non-tenure-track faculty. The space serves as a place to meet with other non-tenure-track faculty, network with and learn from tenure-track/tenured faculty and convene with many students at once. On most campuses the absence of office space prohibits non-tenure-track faculty from collaborating with their faculty colleagues and other students. Therefore, the presence of an open and collaborative space helps to move CxC and LSU toward their goal of student success.

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Multiple Levels of Professional Development

Of chief importance for CxC is offering multiple levels of professional development to best support non-tenure-track faculty who are balancing numerous commitments. CxC implemented a faculty learning community program for faculty interested in thinking critically about teaching, elevating students' communication skills, and networking with peers across disciplines. These small, interdisciplinary faculty groups explore, reflect, and share their experiences on communication-intensive teaching, learning, mentoring, and research. These topic-based sessions are open to non-tenure-track faculty as well, and range in format from discussion, idea incubation, to researching, reading, and writing pods.



CxC also offers a faculty summer institute every year for faculty across ranks, concerned with deepening students' learning of course content. The three-day conference includes:

- Hands-on workshops focused on integrating and applying communication-Intensive pedagogy
- Roundtable discussions and sharing sessions with faculty from across disciplines

Participation in this summer institute affords non-tenure-track faculty the ability to learn more about integrating communication-intensive pedagogy in their classrooms while also networking across ranks and disciplines and increasing morale. In the past 15 years, 63% of attendees have been non-tenure-track, further emphasizing the value and significance of this faculty-to-faculty interaction space.

While the summer institute requires a larger time commitment, CxC also offers more time efficient initiatives including “sandbox days” where faculty gather in the CxC studios to experiment with different teaching technologies, “Sparkshops” where faculty explore current topics in college teaching, and “Lightning Rounds” where faculty share what’s working and not working in their current courses. CxC invites non-tenure-track faculty to participate in these professional development opportunities because they view them as integral to the student success mission at LSU. Therefore, not only are they invited to attend professional development opportunities, but they are also invited to contribute their knowledge for their faculty peers to consume and implement. During the COVID-19 pandemic, CxC is offering “real-time teaching exchanges” via video-conference to keep the engagement going.

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Targeted Outreach & Intentional Timing

Non-tenure-track faculty are often neglected in professional development recruitment and outreach. To effectively access non-tenure-track faculty and ensure their participation, CxC engages in targeted outreach where non-tenure-track faculty have their own listservs and social media channels. CxC also uses department and university-wide communications channels to receive input regarding reaching tools and topics for which they need access and/or training.

CxC is also cognizant of when they hold their events and professional development opportunities. They are aware that NTTF teach at all times during the day, so they intentionally reach out to NTTF to find the most optimal time to hold professional development sessions.

When time, resources, or even a pandemic becomes a barrier to participation and faculty cannot gather, CxC made it a priority to ensure faculty could still receive accessible information regarding teaching and learning online. In the blog

section of their website, the CxC team, along with contributors, share tips and guidance around how to implement more effective teaching practices congruent with the time. These resources exist around the clock so that non-tenure-track faculty in particular can access the information when needed to receive teaching support and guidance.

Monetary Support & Performance Recognition

Non-tenure-track faculty who do not otherwise have access to travel funds are given monetary support through professional development mini-grants, a program that emerged through a CxC and academic affairs partnership. CxC has a commitment to supporting non-tenure-track faculty in their practice and scholarship of teaching and learning and is evident through their mini-grant initiative.

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The Outstanding Faculty Award is a way to recognize a faculty member, irrespective of rank, who represents the commitment, dedication, and excellence that defines and enables the LSU CxC program to transform teaching, learning, and ultimately, student success. The annual selection committee, made up of tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty, carefully choose a recipient that makes an impact in some way within their zone of influence to further the institutional CxC mission. The recipient receives a university-wide recognition among the faculty body, along with a \$1,500 unrestricted stipend. Three of the four past award recipients were full-time non-tenure-track faculty.

Learn more about Louisiana State's efforts to support all faculty through the LSU Communication across the Curriculum (CxC) at: www.cxc.lsu.edu.

Visit The Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success for more example practices and a wide range of resources and toolkits to better support faculty off the tenure track at: pullias.usc.edu/delphi.

