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Professional Development for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty at Sinclair Community College

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- ✓ Learning Community
- ✓ Teaching Award

- ✓ Discussion Groups
- ✓ New Faculty Orientation

The Sinclair Community College is a public two-year institution that has a dual mission of transfer to four-year colleges as well as offering more than 250 associate degree and certification programs. The institution enrolls more than 30,000 students, with its main campus in Dayton, Ohio and several regional centers throughout southwest Ohio. Sinclair strives to maintain a ratio of 50% of courses taught by part-time NTTF (adjuncts; up to 12 credit hours per term) and 50% taught by full-time faculty members, who include both full-time NTTF (instructors) and tenure-track/tenured faculty. The institution has a Faculty Senate that offers governance related to full-time faculty. The institution has had a dedicated Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) for more than a decade, and a robust suite of professional development opportunities are offered. The CTL leverages the institution's location near the original Lily Conference on College Teaching to engage as many faculty members as possible with the conference itself and the culture of valuing teaching and learning that it fosters.

Professional Development Initiatives for NTTF

The CTL offers a wide range of professional development offerings for faculty, from short workshops to a yearlong teaching excellence academy. While most offerings are open to faculty regardless of career status, three initiatives stand out for their inclusivity of NTTF: the first-year faculty experience, incubators, and the adjunct faculty certification course (AFCC). Roughly 20% of part-time faculty participate in some form of professional development through the CTL annually, including 40-60 in the AFCC.

New Faculty Orientation

The first-year faculty experience is an extended orientation and professional development program that is required of all full-time faculty, and full-time NTTF have been intentionally included in order to facilitate their integration into the faculty community and teaching effectiveness. The program includes monthly meetings throughout the academic year and helps to introduce new faculty members to institutional policies and procedures, as well as giving them opportunities to learn about best practices in teaching and learning. Participants are also funded to attend the annual Lily conference wisdom about how to successfully navigate the college as NTTF.

Discussion Groups

The CTL also hosts incubators, which are self-designed and self-led groups where faculty participate in conversations around a common topic of interest. Existing incubators focus on topics such as active learning, experiential learning, and global studies, as well as a reading group incubator where faculty choose an article related to teaching and learning each month and meet to discuss it. There are also incubators to support faculty members with various identities, including a community of color, a dedicated group for graduate students, and an incubator for people who are or want to be parents. Many incubators have monthly in-person meetings, and some have online spaces and/or virtual meetings depending on the goals and needs of participants.

Other Resources that Support NTTF

Teaching Award

The CTL sponsors a number of teaching awards, including the Adjunct Faculty Member of the Year award, which is specific to part-time NTTF. Department chairs can nominate adjuncts for teaching excellence; there is an awardee within each of the four divisions of the college, and one awardee is selected as the institutional Adjunct Faculty Member of the Year.

Website

In addition, the CTL has an in-depth website with a schedule of offerings, descriptions of programs, and a number of resources. The website includes a dedicated section for adjunct faculty that details the AFCC process and the Adjunct Faculty of the Year award, includes links to offices such as human resources and learning technology, and hosts the adjunct faculty handbook.

Assessment of NTTF Needs & Professional Development Effectiveness

The CTL engages in ongoing efforts to assess effectiveness. They conducted a comprehensive needs assessment of faculty in the 2014-2015 academic years, reviewing several years of departmental annual reports, conducting a survey with non-instructional units to identify the scope of CTL and identify potential partnerships. 40 adjunct faculty participated in the focus groups, and their feedback led to revisions in the opportunities offered and the communication strategies used. The CTL is in the process of conducting another needs assessment, including a campus-wide survey and focus groups, to identify how to meet the needs of faculty members at different stages of faculty development and career. The survey had more than 100 NTTF respondents (about 20% of all current NTTF), with similar levels of satisfaction with professional development (about 80%) among NTTF and tenure-track/tenured faculty. As a result of this needs assessment, the CTL has developed a new guideline that different levels of faculty development be offered to faculty across career tracks.

CTL leadership has also worked to develop partnerships across campus. Some of the incubators have resulted from these partnerships- the communities of color incubator is offered in partnership with the Diversity Office, and the eLearning incubator is offered in partnership with the Learning Technology office. In addition, the director of the discussed the importance of having partnerships with Departmental Chairs Council, the Provost's Council, and the Office of Human Resources

Best Practices for Inclusivity of NTTF

The suite of professional development and resources offered by CTL at Sinclair demonstrates several best practices related to the inclusivity of NTTF, especially in terms of being welcoming of adjunct faculty.

- ✓ To balance out institutional policies that limit many resources (engagement opportunities, grants, awards, etc.) to full-time and/or tenure-track/tenured faculty, the CTL has created opportunities specific for adjuncts, including the AFCC and the teaching award. Efforts such as these are important for increasing access and inclusion for adjuncts.
- ✓ The combination of offerings meets the needs of different types of adjunct faculty through offering varying approaches to professional development, including in terms of whether activities occur primarily in person or online; in the time commitment required; and in topic and level of expertise related to teaching and learning; and in whether participants are mixed across career tracks or dedicated solely to adjunct faculty.

There are several best practices specific to the AFCC:

- ✓ While participation is voluntary and no compensation is offered, completion allows adjuncts to receive a pay increase after teaching 9 credit hours.
- ✓ The course is designed to be completed primarily within (or between) one semester, making it accessible to faculty members hired on a per-semester basis.
- ✓ One particularly effective activity is peer observations, which allows adjuncts to connect with other faculty members and actively engage in dialogue centered on teaching and learning. Conducting an observation within their department can benefit curricular alignment and allows for disciplinary conversation about teaching and learning. Being observed by someone who has been trained in conducting observations provides the opportunity for constructive and educated feedback. Additionally, the CTL provides a detailed checklist to guide observations and facilitate discussion of strengths and areas for potential improvement. Peer observations are expressly not considered in faculty evaluations, and the completed evaluation is shared only with the instructor being observed; the CTL receives only a small tear-off that provides a record of the observation.

Professional Development Initiative Design Summary

In this section, we highlight the design of the Adjunct Faculty Certification Course, as it effectively supports the professional development of part-time, non-tenure track faculty through sustained opportunities for learning and community related to teaching effectiveness.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES: Offers an overview of the responsibilities and expectations of adjunct faculty, provides an introduction to institutional resources, and facilitates the use of research-based instructional practices that support student success.

PARTICIPANTS: Limited to part-time (adjunct) faculty across disciplines.

DELIVERY MODE: Hybrid delivery. All-day workshop and observations conducted in-person, with modules and assessment of knowledge conducted online.

STRUCTURE AND LENGTH: The learning portion occurs over about five weeks, including the in-person workshop day and modules. Peer observations of teaching follow.

CONTENT: Topics are predetermined and directly connected to purpose.

FACILITATION: Led by a team of 4-6 facilitators, who are primarily adjunct faculty who have already attended the AFCC and earned the Level II designation. Facilitators are compensated.

DELIVERABLES: Earn a passing score for each assessment of knowledge and provide a record for each of two peer observations (one as observer and one being observed).

ASSESSMENT: The CTL engages in ongoing assessment.

COMPENSATION AND RECOGNITION: Faculty are not paid for participation in any professional development in the CTL. Adjuncts who complete the AFCC and have taught at least 9 credit hours are eligible for a promotion and a pay increase.

Additional Resources

Adjunct-specific resource website: <https://ctl.sinclair.edu/professional-development/adjunct-faculty/> [describes adjunct certification, links to adjunct faculty handbook and adjunct faculty of the year award nomination form, etc.]

Annual reports: <https://ctl.sinclair.edu/leadership/> [describes advisory board and links to annual reports]

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Visit *The Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success* for more case studies of professional development that is accessible and welcoming of adjuncts and non-tenure-track faculty and a wide range of resources and toolkits to better support faculty off the tenure track at: pullias.usc.edu/delphi.

