

Cox, M. D. (2004). Introduction to faculty learning communities. In M.D. Cox & L. Richlin (Eds.), *Building faculty learning communities: New directions for teaching and learning*, no. 97. (pp. 5-23). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Purpose

In this article, Milton Cox, facilitator of an award winning Faculty Learning Community (FLC) program, makes a case for addressing faculty isolation through FLCs on college campuses. He describes how they have been implemented and suggests the degree to which they have been successful, especially at his own institution, Miami University. He also provides statistical and anecdotal evidence on program success, including measures of teacher change, student learning, levels of participation, and development of new curricula.

Learning Community Definition

Cox borrows from Baker (1999) to describe a learning community as a community in which “all members of the group are learners, and the group is organized to learn as a whole system” (p. 6).

FLC Description

“At Miami University, we define an FLC as a cross-disciplinary faculty and staff group of six to fifteen members (eight to twelve members is the recommended size) who engage in an active, collaborative, yearlong program with a curriculum about enhancing teaching and learning and with frequent seminars and activities that provide learning, development, the scholarship of teaching, and community building. A participant...may select a focus course or project in which to try out innovations, assess student learning, and prepare a course or project mini-portfolio; engage in biweekly seminars and some retreats; work with student associates; and present project results to the campus and at national conferences. There are two categories of FLCs: cohort-based and topic-based (p. 8).”

Goals of FLCs (p. 10)

- Build university wide community through teaching and learning
- Increase faculty interest in undergraduate teaching and learning
- Investigate and incorporate ways that diversity can enhance teaching and learning
- Nourish the scholarship of teaching and its application to student learning
- Broaden the evaluation of teaching and the assessment of learning
- Increase faculty collaboration across disciplines
- Encourage reflection about general education and the coherence of learning across disciplines
- Increase the rewards for and prestige of excellent teaching
- Increase financial support for teaching and learning initiatives
- Create an awareness of the complexity of teaching and learning

FLC Benefits

“Faculty learning communities create connections for isolated teachers, establish networks for those pursuing pedagogical issues, meet early-career faculty expectations for community, foster multidisciplinary curricula, and begin to bring community to higher education (p. 5).”