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Bridging the Gap Between Student Feedback and Faculty Development: Incorporating Diagnostic Report Data into Faculty Development Programming

May 5, 2014

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The IDEA SRI Diagnostic Report can be a faculty developer's dream document. Not only can faculty development professionals utilize individual faculty results to engage in discussions about the teaching-learning process and course design, they can also design programs that align with the information provided by the report. At APU, we have designed faculty workshops and Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) that incorporate 3 of the 5 dimensions of teaching identified in the diagnostic report. As a reminder, the 5 dimensions (styles) of teaching are constructed from the 20 teaching methods included on the diagnostic form and are titled "Stimulating Student Interest," "Fostering Student Collaboration," "Establishing Rapport," "Encouraging Student Involvement," and "Designing Classroom Experiences." Each dimension has 3-5 associated teaching methods. The teaching methods and styles appear on the diagnostic report, along with recommendations for the faculty member to consider.

Faculty Workshop

Our faculty workshop, entitled "Engaging Today's Learners: Strategies for Success," focuses on the 3 teaching dimensions of Stimulating Student Interest, Establishing Rapport, and Designing Classroom Experiences. In its 3-hour version, the workshop is highly interactive and applied, and it links established best practices in pedagogy, course design, and theories of learning and motivation with the associated IDEA teaching methods. In its 90-minute version, the linkage is more between high impact teaching practices and the IDEA teaching methods, with less theory and fewer opportunities for hands-on work. We have found ways to make the connection with IDEA more or less apparent, depending on the receptiveness of the audience to student ratings. When we believe that some faculty might be less receptive to adopting effective teaching strategies if we were to link them to IDEA, we talk first about good principles of teaching, followed by an "oh, by the way, look at how these good principles also align with the feedback students will be providing to you about their learning." When our audience is not likely to have any preconceived notions about our instrument of choice for acquiring student feedback, we show the direct links between an IDEA teaching method and the subsequent theory or strategy that will help students experience that method in the classroom. In all cases, we also show our faculty the handout provided by IDEA about the relationship of teaching methods and summary measures of teaching effectiveness. This "hard data" will often win over those who believe that student ratings of teacher or course excellence are based solely on emotional responses or teacher popularity.

Faculty Learning Community

The principles that we utilize in the faculty workshops are also the same used in the Faculty Learning Community (FLC) entitled "Discovering Strategies for a Successful Classroom." The 8-session FLC meets once a month and devotes two meetings to each of the three teaching dimensions already discussed. In between each FLC meeting, faculty have opportunity to make adjustments to their course, try new strategies, or start thinking about a new design for the following semester. Facilitators also offer individual consultation or course observation as part of the FLC experience. Each session incorporates the IDEA POD-Notes that are associated with the teaching methods being discussed that day.

Both of APU's faculty development initiatives have met with favorable feedback, and the workshop has now become a staple of New Faculty Orientation, while the FLC has had strong participation for three consecutive years. I would encourage institutions that use the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Diagnostic Form to find ways to incorporate faculty development programs that align with the feedback provided by the Diagnostic Report, so that faculty can be resourced to provide a more meaningful educational experience for students and thus experience more success with the student ratings of instruction process.