Community of Practice

Professional Development Successes and Missteps in the First Year Writing Program at San Jose State University
1) Developing a community of practice through professional development
2) Survey of professional development at CSU campuses
3) SJSU’s First Year Writing Program
4) Professional Development: Missteps
5) Professional Development: Successes
6) Guiding principles for facilitating a community of practice
Professional Development
Mission & Goals

Professionalization: to create a group of instructors working collaboratively to engage with current conversations in the field of Rhetoric & Composition.

Teachers “need to engage in high-quality professional development if they are to keep pace with and respond to changes in the [teaching of writing and changes in the ways students learn], and, at the same time, retain their energy, enthusiasm, and commitment to high-quality teaching.” (Day and Sach)
FRAMING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Guiding Questions

1) How does one "professionalize" instructors teaching in a field they did not train in, with little time for professional development?

2) How does one create collaborative opportunities to engage with conversations in the field of rhet/comp?

3) How does one use professionalization to change the historically marginalized status of writing instructors on campus?
POLL

What professional development opportunities are available on your campus?

- Special topic workshops
- Assessment / norming workshops
- Guest lecture series
- Teaching cohorts
- Reading / Writing circles
- Other
POLL

Are professional development workshops:

➢ paid?
➢ contractual?
➢ well attended?
FIRST YEAR WRITING PROGRAM

Administration Structure

Writing Program Administrator
- hiring, reappointment, promotion, supervision
- Teacher-student mediation
- Curriculum development
- Budget management
- Course scheduling

Assistant Writing Program Administrator
- Graduate Teaching Associate training & supervision
- FYW program assessment

Assistant Writing Program Administrator
- Stretch English
- Early Start
FIRST YEAR WRITING PROGRAM

Curriculum

GENERAL EDUCATION AREA A2 WRITTEN COMMUNICATION
- ENGLISH 1A: FIRST YEAR WRITING
- ENGLISH 1AF / 1AS: STRETCH ENGLISH

GENERAL EDUCATION AREA A3 CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING
- ENGLISH 2: CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING

GENERAL EDUCATION AREA C2 HUMANITIES-LETTERS
- ENGLISH 1B: ARGUMENT AND ANALYSIS

SJSU SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY
FIRST YEAR WRITING PROGRAM

Faculty

- Lecture faculty teach 98% of the first year writing courses

- Roughly 52-60 lecture faculty on staff (turnover rate: 8%)

- Educational background
  - MA in English Literature—27%
  - MFA in Creative Writing—28%
  - PhD in English Literature—25%
  - MA / MFA student teaching associates—20%

- Workload per academic year
  - 29% teach 4 classes
  - 27% teach 6 classes
  - 44% teach 8 classes
  - 33% teach at multiple institutions
  - 12% teach in multiple departments at SJSU
POLL

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT WHO YOUR LECTURERS ARE?

- LINGUISTICS
- RHETORIC AND COMP
- LITERATURE
- CREATIVE WRITING
- TESOL
- OTHER – PLEASE TYPE INTO THE OPEN CHAT POD
WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER AVERAGE WORKLOAD PER TERM?

- 1 CLASS
- 2 CLASSES
- 3 CLASSES
- 4 CLASSES
- 5 CLASSES
- OTHER – PLEASE TYPE INTO THE OPEN CHAT POD
FIRST YEAR WRITING PROGRAM

Professional Development: AY 1

English Department meetings (contractual)
  - Opening day meeting: August and January

FYW Program workshops
  - Fall & Spring workshop (contractual)
  - Stretch professional development workshops (contractual; monetary stipend for participants)

Other workshops across campus
  - Center for Faculty Development
FIRST YEAR WRITING PROGRAM
Professional development: AY 2 & 3

English Department meetings (contractual)
  • Opening day meeting: August and January

FYW Program workshops
  • Fall & Spring workshop series (non-contractual, monetary stipend for participants)
  • Stretch professional development series (contractual; monetary stipend for participants)

Other workshops across campus
  • Center for Faculty Development
  • Writing across the Curriculum (monetary stipend for participants)
MANAGING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Manager

Designing the organizational structures that support program learning outcomes and teaching models

- Defining parameters of professional development
- Crafting specialization
FACILITATING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Facilitator

THE GOALS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

• “Bring out the community’s own internal direction, character, and energy.”

• “Create events, activities, and relationships that help their potential value [as writing specialists] emerge and enable them to discover new ways to harvest it.”

• “Invite many different levels of participation.”

FACILITATING TEACHING COHORTS

Goal #1: “The goal of community design is to bring out the community’s own internal direction, character, and energy.”

Teaching and Learning Cohorts

- Group of 7 instructors meet twice a month to research best practices, discuss classroom challenges, observe each other’s classes.
- Deliverables: (1) teaching portfolio (2) peer evaluation reports (3) FYW program assessment report.
- Value: (1) connection to place (2) dialogue between “inside and outside perspectives” (3) shared curriculum (4) reappointment and promotion policy.
FACILITATING CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

GOAL #2: “Create events, activities, and relationships that help their potential value [as writing specialists] emerge and enable them to discover new ways to harvest it.”

Curriculum Development

• GE pathway composition course, hybrid composition course, EO 1110 supplemental instruction course

• Deliverables: (1) shared curriculum for GE classes across disciplines (2) hybrid ENGL 2 pilot course (3) GE A2 supported instruction course

• Value: (1) opportunity to professionalize non-writing faculty (2) address workload issues
FACILITATING ASSESSMENT

“Create events, activities, and relationships that help their potential value [as writing specialists] emerge and enable them to discover new ways to harvest it.”

Peer Teaching Observations

• Redesigned teaching evaluation form
• Writing faculty peer-to-peer observations
• Deliverable: peer evaluation report
• Value: meaningful feedback on teaching effectiveness
FACILITATING PARTICIPATION

GOAL #3: “Invite many different levels of participation.”

Public:
• Professional development workshops (face-to-face and Zoom)
• First Year Writing Canvas course
  --syllabi, assignment sheets, classroom activities, discussion threads, teaching resources

Private:
• One-on-one conversations
• Open office hours
WORKLOAD AND BUDGET

Challenges

WORKLOAD

• Support structures

BUDGET

• Monetary stipends or professional development funds
• Multi-program workshops (WAC, Center for Faculty Development, Writing Center)
• Campus-wide funding sources (undergraduate studies, summer bridge programs)
• Campus RSCA grants
FRAMING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Guiding Questions

1) How does one professionalize instructors teaching in a field they did not train in, with little time for professional development?
   - Instructor generated values
   - WPA connects the community and organizes activities

2) How does one engage instructors with current conversations in the teaching of writing?
   - Teaching cohorts, program and peer evaluations

3) How does one use professionalization to change the traditionally low status of writing instructors on campus?
   - Curriculum development, program assessment and planning
COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE OUTCOMES

Lecturer faculty who now …

• Present papers at regional and national conferences.
• Receive grants to design supplemental instruction models for underserved students.
• Join teaching cohorts to research best practices for active learning and inclusive pedagogies.
DEFINING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

“One way to approach professional development is through self-direction, in which [the lecturer] takes responsibility for her or his own development. Communities of practice combine self-directed learning with collaborative learning.”

“Learning [is] not the mere acquisition of skills or accumulation of knowledge. Instead, [it is] conceptualized learning as a social process in which learners are situated in CoPs, groups of people who share a common development goal.”

“As adults participate in a CoP, their identities are developed and negotiated based on the context of the situation; participants may experience increased self-efficacy, higher self-esteem, and fewer feelings of marginalization in the larger community.”

Putman, Paul, and Bridget Kriner. “Using a Community of Practice to Enhance the Adjunct Experience.” Adjunct Faculty Voices. Ed. Roy Fuller, Marie Kendall Brown, Kimberly Smith, Adrianna Kezar.
DESIGNING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

1) Design for evolution
   • “The purpose of design is not to impose a structure but to help the community develop” its own.
   • “Effective community design is built on the collective experience of community members.”
   • As the community evolves, “the primary role of design is to catalyze that evolution.”

2) Create dialogues between inside and outside perspectives
   • “Only an insider can appreciate the issues at the heart of the domain, the knowledge that is important to share, the challenges [they face], and the latent potential in emerging ideas and techniques.”

3) Invite levels of participation
   • “Good community architecture invites many different levels of participation.”
4) Develop both public and private community spaces
   • “Like a local neighborhood, dynamic communities are rich with connections that happen both in the public places of the community—meetings, Website—and the private space—the one-on-one networking of community members.”

5) Focus on value
   • “Value is key to community life, because participation in most communities is voluntary.”
   • “Rather than attempting to determine their expected value in advance, communities need to create events, activities, and relationships that help their potential value emerge and enable them to discover new ways to harvest it.”

1) What similar programs do you offer on your campus?
   • Teaching or learning cohorts
   • Curriculum development initiatives
   • Program design & policy assessment
   • Peer observations

2) How do you measure their success?
First Year Writing Program

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