FLC Facilitator Toolkit

A quick-start guide to your FLC

# Overview

Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) are designed to give small groups of faculty (typically 8-10) the opportunity to engage in sustained, meaningful conversations about teaching and learning with supportive colleagues from across campus. Members meet regularly throughout the length of the program as they explore areas of interest, leading to changes in their teaching practice.

Research shows that faculty who engage in FLCs have more confidence in their teaching, better understand how their students learn, and are more willing to try new pedagogical approaches in their classrooms. Participation in FLCs has also been shown to increase scholarly activity and feelings of belonging at their institution, as well as increase feelings of connectedness between students and faculty.

**Product**

By the end of the semester, each CLS and FLC participant should be able to point to a change or innovation they have made in their classroom or on their syllabus to an assignment, activity, or course material as a result of their participation in the FLC. Each participant will submit a critical reflection that includes:

* A brief description of the original assignment, activity, or course material.
* The purpose of the assignment, activity, or course material.
* A description of the change or innovation you have made to the assignment, activity, or course material.
* What you hoped to accomplish with this change or innovation (i.e. your goal)
* Did this change or innovation meet your expectations?
* What was the outcome for your students?
* What will you do differently next time?
* What effect did your participation in this FLC have on your teaching?

# Recruiting Membership in your Faculty Learning Community

# **Getting the word out**

Each institution will have their own avenues for advertising their Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs). For example, some may have daily email announcements or faculty newsletters. Your teaching and learning center may also have methods in which they reach out to faculty to notify them of programming. If your FLC is specific to your department or college, flyers in high-traffic areas can also be useful (see included flyer, which you can customize for your purposes).

In addition to advertising, it may be beneficial to do some targeted recruitment of faculty whom the facilitators know may be interested in their topic.

## **Recruitment**

Sample recruitment email:

We are now accepting applications and nominations for members of the Spring 2019 Faculty Learning Communities (FLC) through **Wednesday, December 5.** FLCs will focus on the following topics:

* [insert facilitator name, topic, and brief description here for each FLC]

The FLC program is sponsored by the University System of Georgia and facilitated by faculty members here at [insert name of your institution]. FLCs give faculty members from across campus the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations that lead to innovation and change in the classroom.

FLC membership is an acknowledgment of excellent, innovative, and effective teaching and is open to all faculty who are engaged in undergraduate teaching.

Each FLC will have a shared pool of $500 available to support their work. FLC Fellows will meet four to six times over the course of the spring semester to engage in facilitated discussions around their area(s) of interest as they work to incorporate strategies into their courses.

# **Applications**

Applications should include questions about why potential members are interested in being in this community, what they hope to get out of it, and a pledge to engage fully in the community and to prioritize the meetings.

We recommend that the facilitator choose the dates and times to meet ahead of time and include this information on the application. This ensures that applicants can meet at the specified times.

See accompanying sample application form.

# **Selection**

Participants should represent a balance of needs and expertise to ensure a group with a broad and diverse background. Participation should never be viewed as a place for faculty who “need help” with their teaching; participation in FLCs should always be voluntary.

Membership should be seen as an honor that offers the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations that lead to innovation and change.

The ideal size of an FLC is 8-10 members. All FLC participants will receive a certificate at the completion of their work with the FLC.

## Key Responsibilities for Facilitating Your FLC

## **Building Community**

One of the key responsibilities in being a facilitator for an FLC is to build a sense of community amongst your participants. See *Ten Necessary Qualities for Building Community.*

## **Meetings and Activities**

The facilitator will determine date, time, location, and length of each meeting, with a goal of at least 5-6 meetings over the course of the semester. They will communicate with members ahead of time and ensure that the community stays active and engaged during the meetings. Facilitators will reach out to members who are not regularly attending meetings and encourage them to stay engaged.

It is useful to schedule meetings for the entire semester ahead of time so all FLC members have those dates on their calendars.

Food or refreshments provide an opportunity for informal discussion before or after meetings. Consider providing food or refreshments (often members will take turns bringing snacks) or meeting at a venue that serves food but is still conducive for discussions.

It is important to note that FLCs are collaborative spaces; the substance of the meetings and the path that the community takes is co-created by all participants. At the same time, the facilitator’s role is to help keep the community focused, engaged, and moving forward towards their goals.

**Securing Resources**

Each FLC has a $500 budget. The facilitator can use some of these funds to order relevant books and other supplies for each member, and for food at meetings.

# What Do We Do During Our Meetings?

The first meeting should be devoted to group goal-setting, with an emphasis on what the participants would like to learn and discuss, and what project they will focus on during the semester.

Future meetings could have a relevant article or chapter as the focus of the discussion, with the facilitator or members leading those conversations (determined ahead of time).

When appropriate, FLC members could visit each other’s classrooms to observe changes or innovations to give feedback and support, or review and give feedback on redesigned assignments, activities, or course materials. Meetings could focus on debriefing those observations or reviews.

# Support

There will be times when you have questions or would like to discuss ideas with the USG Office of Faculty Development or with your CLS colleagues at different institutions. We have set up a listserv to serve as a place for pedagogical discussions, trouble shooting, and sharing ideas. To post to the list, send an email to: CHANCELSCHOLARS@listserv.uga.edu

Once you have chosen the focus of your FLC, we will add you to the topical listserv as well. This will be the place for topic-specific pedagogical discussions.

**Topic listservs:**

* **Mindset:** USGMINDSET@listserv.uga.edu
* **Inclusive Pedagogies:** USGINCLUSIV@listserv.uga.edu
* **Small Teaching/Interactive Lectures:** USGINTERACTIVE@listserv.uga.edu
* **Course Design:** USGCOURSEDESIGN@listserv.uga.edu

Support may also come from the teaching and learning center on your campus. These are pedagogical experts who will be familiar with the CLS program and with the pedagogies you are exploring.