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Building a Sense of Belonging for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Across Campuses in the Lehigh Valley Consortium

2020 Finalist for the Delphi Award

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From the Delphi Project database of

Example Best Practices to Support Non-Tenure-Track Faculty

- ✓ Networking Opportunities
- ✓ Pedagogical Development
- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Community of Support

The Lehigh Valley Association for Independent Colleges (LVAIC), the oldest of its kind in the nation, is comprised of over 900 non-tenure-track faculty across six different institutions. Where most would not dare work with different institutions with different missions, goals, and priorities, Lehigh Valley moved boldly and courageously to create structures that support community, pedagogical development, and networking opportunities for non-tenure-track faculty across their schools. The six institutions in the consortium, Cedar Crest College, Desales University, Lafayette College, Lehigh University, Moravian College, and Muhlenberg College, all independently commit funding to the LVAIC for consortia events. Embedded within a collaboration of this magnitude are important lessons and examples of best practices for supporting non-tenure-track faculty, some of who teach at other institutions in the region and are longing to feel a sense of belonging and be part of a community of support.

Networking Opportunities

Building connections and networking is one of the guiding principles described by LVAIC. The organization hosts an annual networking event where non-tenure-track faculty from across the consortium come together for the chance to get to know each other, learn of pedagogical techniques others are using, and provide research and career development opportunities. These networking events and opportunities are unique in that each non-tenure-track faculty member comes from a different institution and therefore can provide their colleagues at neighboring institutions new ways to think about teaching and learning, while being presented with opportunities for career advancement. Such networking might also include hearing about opportunities for teaching a class.

Pedagogical Development

LVAIC and the consortium are primarily concerned with helping non-tenure-track faculty develop their teaching practices and skills. Too often, non-tenure-track faculty are not given the opportunity to partake in pedagogical development opportunities, and sometimes institutions do not have the resources to provide support for their non-tenure-track faculty. However, pooling resources across multiple institutions provides a unique opportunity to develop support that might

not otherwise be possible for non-tenure track faculty. Therefore, this consortium and collaboration of six institutions enable deep learning and development to happen so that faculty can significantly improve their teaching.

Non-tenure-track faculty in the consortium are also afforded the opportunity to participate in virtual book clubs and hear presentations from pedagogical experts and other educators. In addition, faculty off the tenure track have access to a summer course design institute where they can learn new and emerging pedagogical strategies and practices that contribute to building a better learning environment for their students.

Collaboration

Inherent in the work being done by LVAIC and the six institutions is a commitment to collaboration across institutional contexts and differences in order to invest in the growth and development of non-tenure-track faculty. To make it easier for each institution in the consortium, LVAIC outlines their monetary needs for programming and funding for non-tenure-track faculty (to date, \$5000/year for 2020-2023). Each institution sets forth money to contribute to LVAIC to

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ensure non-tenure-track faculty are given opportunities to network with each other, develop their teaching practices and strategies, and continue to feel a sense that they too belong as important contributors to the overall mission and goals at their respective institutions.

Community of Support

Also inherent in the work in the consortium is the importance of developing a community of support for non-tenure track faculty. Where so many institutions in the Lehigh Valley were struggling to adequately support faculty off the tenure track, this partnership showed that bringing together neighboring schools to build a strong and mighty community has its benefits for both the overall non-tenure track experience and student learning.

Learn more about the Lehigh Valley Associations's efforts to support all faculty at: lvaic.org

Visit The Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success for more example practices and a wide range of resources and toolkits to better support faculty off the tenure track at: pullias.usc.edu/delphi.

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