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Professional Development for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty at the University of Michigan's College of Engineering

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- ✓ Learning Community
- ✓ Career Development

- ✓ Discussion Group
- ✓ New Faculty Orientation

The University of Michigan is a multi-campus, public, four-year, research-intensive university that enrolls more than 40,000 undergraduate students and 20,000 graduate students across its campuses in Ann Arbor, Dearborn, and Flint. The institution's Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) was the first teaching center in the United States, founded in 1962. Nearly 52% of the nearly 6,300 instructional staff on the Ann Arbor campus are non-tenure-track faculty, and in 2004, lecturers unionized to gain collective bargaining rights.

The Center for Research on Learning and Teaching in Engineering (CRLT-Engin) operates on the north campus in Ann Arbor through an innovative partnership between the CRLT and the Office of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the College of Engineering. Instructional developers in CRLT-Engin attend CRLT meetings and trainings, allowing for cohesiveness in professional development offerings, while also developing expertise in STEM-focused education in order to provide more tailored support to the faculty and graduate teaching assistants in the college.

The College of Engineering enrolls about 7,500 undergraduate students and 3,300 graduate students across 11 departments. There are nearly 650 instructional faculty in Engineering, 126 of whom are non-tenure-track lecturers (NTTF; about 20%). The majority of NTTF are full-time.

College administrators recognized a need to better support NTTF. As a result, in 2017, the college created a Lecturer Advisory Committee and appointed a faculty member to work part time to coordinate lecturer development. The director of lecturer development is now partnering with CRLT-Engin to create professional development events specifically for NTTF.

Professional Development Initiatives for NTTF

The CRLT-Engin offers a wide range of professional development offerings for faculty. These include individual consultations, workshops for individuals, and customized workshops for departments. As a result of the partnership between the college and CRLT-Engin, several new initiatives have been created, including an event specific to the career development of NTTF and NTTF-specific experiences for both components of their New Faculty Foundations program: faculty orientation and

a discussion group which provide new faculty with sustained opportunities to engage in learning and community that supports their instructional effectiveness.

Career Development

The University of Michigan has four levels of appointments for lecturers, in addition to a separate adjunct designation. Therefore, the Dean's office hosts an event each year where small groups of lecturers share breakfast with college administrations and leaders in order to make the review and promotion process more transparent for NTTF.

New Faculty Orientation

While the college has always hosted an orientation for new faculty, they have now created a separate session for NTTF where more experienced lecturers discuss the instructional practices they use in the classroom as well as their wisdom about how to successfully navigate the college as NTTF.

Discussion Group

In addition to orientation, CRLT-Engin hosts monthly gatherings for new faculty to discuss instructional and career development topics based on their interests and needs. Some meetings are held for faculty across career tracks, while others are NTTF-specific. They have intentionally structured this group to be informal so that NTTF feel comfortable stopping by, and they vary the day of the week, time of day, and location in order to reach a greater number of NTTF.

Other Resources that Support NTTF

In addition to rethinking professional development opportunities to increase their accessibility and relevance to NTTF, the College of Engineering has also developed other initiatives to better support NTTF.

Director of Lecturer Development

This position allows for a specific focus on the needs of NTTF and the development of relationships and resources to increase lecturer support. The director contributes to assessment efforts and planning of professional development opportunities for lecturers. The director also engages in small group and one-to-one advising, mentoring, and professional coaching sessions with NTTF, especially to support lecturers during important career transitions.

In addition, this faculty member is an advocate for lecturers, building relationships with department leaders to create greater consistency in the lecturer role across the college, working with the lecturer union to create better alignment in the two groups' approaches to supporting NTTF, and identifying ways that existing programs can be changed or expanded given the increasing number of lecturers in the college. The director also reports findings to the Dean's office to foster the development of policies that create greater equity and consistency for NTTF.

Lecturer Advisory Committee

This committee includes representatives from human resources, college administration, and lecturers from several departments in the college. The committee offers opportunities for feedback from and dialogue with lecturers, as well as sharing information across departments in order to promote a culture of inclusion for NTTF that includes consistent policies and practices.

Recognition Event

The college hosts an annual event specifically to recognize lecturers at which several college leaders made presentations.

This event provided an opportunity for collegiality while also demonstrating the support of college-level administrators.

Website

The Dean's office and CRLT-Engin host a quick resource guide on their websites for new faculty to be able to successfully plan and teach their first course in the college.

Assessment of NTTF Needs & Professional Development Effectiveness

The college conducted an in-depth needs assessment in order to plan professional development initiatives. Additionally, the Lecturer Advisory Committee hosted a number of focus groups with lecturers to better understand their experiences and needs. The director of lecturer development also conducted a number of additional interviews with lecturers in order to learn about lecturer roles, perspectives, and experiences within different departments.

As part of ongoing assessment efforts, they have also gathered feedback qualitatively from lecturers and administrators who participated in events to identify the benefits that stakeholders perceived.

Best Practices for Inclusivity of NTTF

The suite of professional development and resources offered by CRLT-Engin and the College of Engineering demonstrates several best practices related to the inclusivity of NTTF, especially in terms of creating equity and sense of belonging among lecturers.

- ✓ Situating professional development opportunities within the engineering context can motivate faculty to engage because of the greater alignment of evidence-based instructional practices specific to STEM compared to university-wide discussions of concepts like active learning and academic challenge, as well as more specific career-related practices in the college.
- ✓ The creation of a director of lecturer development offers a model of the potential to effect change to better support NTTF through a dedicated role.
- ✓ The director's partnership with an educational developer in CRLT-Engin supports the success of professional development opportunities by leveraging knowledge of college and union policies, structures, and norms in the culture with instructional design expertise. Further, as each person is attuned to other opportunities within their context, they can help avoid duplication of existing services and save resources.
- ✓ By working individually with lecturers and department chairs, the director has developed an in-depth understanding of policies, practices, and culture in each department and has created more awareness of the needs of NTTF, especially influencing policy at the college level.
- ✓ The creation of professional development sessions, events, and discussions that are tailored to lecturers are not only more effective to meet their needs but also help NTTF feel valued.
- ✓ Supplementing new faculty orientation with monthly meetups provides new faculty with sustained opportunities to develop relationships, learn about available resources, and discuss teaching and learning. Further, the practice of combining new faculty in some meetings and offering some lecturer-specific meetings helps NTTF develop relationships across departments and career tracks while also having a separate space dedicated to them.

Professional Development Initiative Design Summary

In this section, we highlight the design of the New Faculty Foundations discussion group, as this program is designed specifically to support the professional development of non-tenure track faculty through sustained opportunities for learning and community related to teaching effectiveness.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES: To support the instructional effectiveness of lecturers, integrate them in the college community, and make them feel valued for their contributions.

PARTICIPANTS: New faculty across departments and programs in the College of Engineering.

DELIVERY MODE: Designed to be in-person; moved fully online in spring 2020, with many of the orientation modules completed asynchronously in addition to a synchronous virtual gathering as part of orientation and monthly meetups also conducted synchronously.

STRUCTURE AND LENGTH: Meetings are scheduled once a month during the academic year with intentional variation of the day of the week and time they are offered to make them accessible to lecturers with different schedules. Some sessions are NTTF-specific and others include all new faculty.

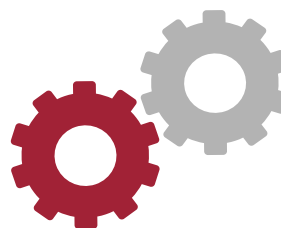
CONTENT: Participants complete a survey to indicate their preferred discussion topics. Topics range from instructional practices to student support and career development.

FACILITATION: Facilitated by an educational developer in CRLT-Engin.

DELIVERABLES: As part of orientation, lecturers create an action plan based on the professional development resources available to them.

ASSESSMENT: Ongoing qualitative assessment of the effectiveness of events and lecturers continually changing needs.

COMPENSATION AND RECOGNITION: Lecturers are not compensated for participating in professional development.



Additional Resources

CRTL-Engin Homepage. <https://crlte.engin.umich.edu/> (Includes information about the New Faculty Foundations program, workshops, resources for getting started teaching, and more)

College of Engineering Resources for Lecturers. <https://adaa.engin.umich.edu/lecturers/> (Includes information about new lecturer orientation, the Lecturer Advisory Committee, and more)

Sherick, H. M., Khan, P., & Bailey, E. J. (2020). Lessons learned in implementing increased support and building academic community for teaching faculty. ASEE Virtual Conference. <https://peer.asee.org/lessons-learned-in-implementing-increased-support-and-building-academic-community-for-teaching-faculty> (Includes a link to the conference paper describing many of these initiatives).

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Visit The Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success for more case studies of professional development that is accessible and welcoming of adjuncts and non-tenure-track faculty and a wide range of resources and toolkits to better support faculty off the tenure track at: pullias.usc.edu/delphi.

