

Action Learning Project Executive Summary: LSC Mentoring for New Faculty Luoma Leadership Academy 2009-2010

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Problem: LSC's current new faculty orientation process includes a first-week orientation session, a handful of online training modules, and voluntary, unstructured mentoring relationships with experienced full-time faculty. The college would greatly benefit from a strategic annual new faculty mentoring program that would provide new faculty with the information, skills, and recourses necessary to teach at the college, including information about department practices, grading policies, curriculum development, classroom management, teaching pedagogies, and academic assessment.

Team Charge:

- Develop a procedure for a structured, annual new faculty mentoring process that would be used by the Academic Affairs to orient new faculty to teaching and other professional activities at LSC.
- Analyze current best practices in faculty mentoring and recommend a college-wide mentoring process that supplements and complements MnSCU's system-wide new faculty orientation.

Project Overview: Our team's activities included

- Monthly meetings via ITV and a project course shell in D2L to manage data
- Review of current literature on mentoring theories and practices; development of a needs assessment
- Interviews with current faculty mentors in informal program at LSC
- Creation and administration of an online survey to all LSC faculty (full and part time)
- Review of results, development of recommendations and presentation to team advisors

Conclusions and Recommendations based on research:

- Faculty are interested in a structured mentoring program, but caution against making it too formal or too burdensome; participation should be voluntary
- Large group trainings and meetings would not be integral; however training and professional development opportunities related to pedagogy and successful classroom management techniques would be appropriate
- Mentors and mentees would benefit most from being matched within academic divisions
- The relationship should last at least one semester, mentors /mentees should meet at least once a month
- Because the current economic reality does not allow for stipends or release time for mentors, internal awards and recognition for mentors should be considered.

Leadership Lessons Learned:

- Working on this project has been a successful collaboration of the project members and the process of action learning has benefitted all participants
- Action Learning provides a means to accomplish change through asking questions in ways that foster collaboration, cooperation, and innovation.
- Having roles (facilitator, time keeper, note taker) and an agenda really helped us to have productive meetings via interactive television (ITV). It was good that we rotated the roles too. Raising hands to facilitate conversation was a key part of the success of the ITV meetings. "Good News" type of activities at the start of the meetings gives the meeting a positive tone and brings people up to speed.
- Building a strong group foundation to begin with during our first week at the conference was very helpful. It helped getting to know each other's DiSC ahead of time too. There is a lot of value in doing personality tests, DiSC, etc. and doing "team building" when a group first forms.
- Our group had an outstanding ability to ask questions. Our "coach" rarely had to intervene. Often times, right about the time our coach would think of a question, someone would ask it.
- Creating timelines for group tasks was also important and kept the group on track. Even though they were somewhat tentative and sometimes changed, the timelines and deadlines gave our team focus.