

Improving faculty metacognition for 21st century learning

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Abstract

Business faculty members may boast terminal degrees in their field of expertise and claim, justifiably, extensive work experience; however, many professionals lack confidence and proficiency within a learning environment. Business teachers, indeed, all teachers, need support in becoming effective facilitators as well as in employing effective engagement strategies within the classroom. In 2012, with support from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Consortium for Higher Education (SEPCHE) and grants from the Teagle Foundation, a business professor, a music professor, and an academic VP envisioned increased faculty and student engagement and satisfaction. They began a series of qualitative research projects to determine processes to foster faculty metacognition.

The initial research set out to determine to what extent the use of iPad technology generates faculty metacognition. In 2013, the purpose of the research was to determine to what extent the formation of a peer learning community would foster faculty metacognition. The second project evolved into an academic "start-up" called the "Immaculata University (IU) Academy for Metacognition," a faculty learning community consisting of volunteer, full-time and part-time faculty members who defined, tested, and implemented engagement strategies and techniques. Faculty members, ranging from many academic disciplines, literally "thought about their thinking." Members maintained a reflective journal detailing experiences and transitions occurring within the classroom. Group gatherings allowed teachers to share their experiences, to receive feedback, and to focus on new strategies. After one semester of convening, Academy members recognized that several best practices were emerging and they created the "IU Cross-disciplinary Rubric for Faculty Metacognition." This tool helps teachers to gauge their own metacognitive practices as they plan lessons, implement engagement activities, and reflect on effectiveness of the overall lesson. The rubric is designed to encourage self-assessment and personal goal-setting as teachers identify themselves as "novice," "apprentice," "practitioner," or "master." After "test-driving" the rubric during the fall 2014 semester, Academy members reported an increased level of faculty confidence and satisfaction. Presently, the rubric is being updated and will be submitted for copy write protection. This tool will be uploaded to the IU computer platform for use by all faculty members.

While antidotal findings indicate that students are benefiting from a more meaningful and reflective learning environment, achieving a higher level of academic success, and embracing more critical and reflective thinking, the Academy needs to create processes to measure this data. The Academy of Metacognition and similar faculty initiatives can help teachers to employ their wealth of knowledge and experience in interactive, engaging practices that will bolster their effectiveness and confidence in the classroom.
