



Fostering Long-Term, Faculty-Led Professional Development through FIGs

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Durham Technical Community College's Teaching-Learning Center (TLC) has offered stand alone and short-term faculty development programming since 1998. These workshops, presentations, trainings, and ½ day conferences have supported a breadth of topics on excellence in teaching and learning for full-time and part-time faculty. In Fall 2014, the TLC began a purposeful expansion to include additional programming that is long-term and structured to provide greater depth on topics of most interest to faculty. The expansion included learning communities in the form of faculty interest groups known as "FIGs."

A FIG is a small group of diverse faculty and staff who are interested in improving teaching and learning practices in a particular course or discipline. At Durham Tech, the FIGs foster collaboration among faculty from a variety of teaching disciplines and staff from across campus. They also encourage data-informed decision making about classroom practices and support improvement of course completion rates. From Fall 2014 to Spring 2016, five FIGs researched best practices, implemented a variety of new teaching strategies, and examined data in their reflections on the impact of the new strategies. The five FIGs addressed the following topics:

1. Incorporating instruction on metacognition in science courses
2. Flipping units of instruction in science courses
3. Developing cross-curricular assignments in ENG 112
4. Decreasing withdrawal rates in ACA 122
5. Increasing student motivation in SPA 111

Each FIG was led by a full-time faculty member who taught the course under study. The additional members of each FIG included a variety of full-time and part-time faculty as well as staff. Each semester (Fall 2014, Spring 2015, Fall 2015), the teams met twice in organized TLC workshops and then at least once individually. In Spring 2016, the FIGs shared their process and results in presentations in the TLC. The FIG leads received stipends of \$300 per semester, and the part-time faculty participants received stipends of \$150 per semester.

The FIG participants regularly expressed appreciation for the structure of the program, which "forced" them out of their offices and expected that they be held accountable to each other and the TLC. The final evaluation of the FIG experience asked participants to reflect on what they liked best about the program. Representative responses included:

- The autonomy and structured collaboration
- The opportunity to really sit down and talk about the best way to get students to study. Interaction between colleagues is one of the most beneficial things that a college can promote.
- The required meetings with deadlines and assignments and it made us stick to the topic and not bump this to the top of the to-do list for when we have time
- Having time to share ideas and work together to impact our students in a positive way. It was very nice to get to work with adjuncts that don't often get to contribute.

Durham Tech will facilitate another round of FIGs beginning in Spring 2017. For more information, please contact [Gabby McCutchen](#).

You can also visit the Durham Tech TLC [website](#) or Miami University's Faculty Learning Communities [page](#).