NC-NET News

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## A-B Tech Offers Streamlined Approach to New Faculty Onboarding

For new faculty, the first few weeks on the job can be overwhelming. New environments, new colleagues, new students, new technology, and often, a host of new online accounts can contribute to the anxiety level. Members of the Instructional Support and Online Learning and Faculty Development departments at A-B Tech Community College have worked diligently to ease the transition of new faculty – both full-time and adjunct – into the A-B Tech family. Their efforts are definitely paying off this semester. Because of concerns shared by colleagues about the inconsistent communication methods used in the new faculty onboarding process, the team set out to untangle what they discovered was a confusing flow of information. This communication "congestion" had led to frequent scenarios in which no one knew for sure whose responsibility it was to officially welcome faculty, set up college email and Moodle accounts, or provide information about required professional development courses. Each situation varied, depending on a faculty member's instructional division, whether or not one of their courses was "next up" in the peer review process, and to what degree the faculty member would be teaching online. The team, along with department chairs, staff, and many faculty, agreed it was time for a change.

Team members Barb Browning, Kathryn (Katie) Hast, and Bethany Emory all contributed to a new process that started with a bit of reverse engineering. Katie began by mapping out the existing onboarding process. One glance at the maze-like flowchart depicting the current practice led Barb and Katie to an "a-ha" moment. "Wow – we have to fix this!" they said. After meetings with Human Resources staff, Information Technology staff, and department chairs, Barb drafted a plan that tackled the issues stakeholders said were of highest priority. Even changes to what seem like simple steps can make a difference. "For instance," Barb said, "You never realize the repercussions of not setting up a new faculty member's college email account before other accounts, such as Moodle and Web Advisor, are established."

Taking center stage in the new onboarding process is a set of numbered steps that are essential to ensuring existing staff and new faculty are all on the same page. Leveraging their Faculty Support Center website, the team created a "Get Started" web page that identifies for newly hired instructors the steps they should follow so they can hit the ground running. The page offers not just a checklist, but a linear structure that if followed, will ensure new faculty have access to the tools and information they need to be successful. The page also identifies who can help you with each step and how to contact them. Since the Faculty Support website is home to required professional development courses as well as a host of other useful teaching tools, using the Get Started page as

the launching pad for new faculty should put the website high on their browser's list of bookmarked sites for faculty support.
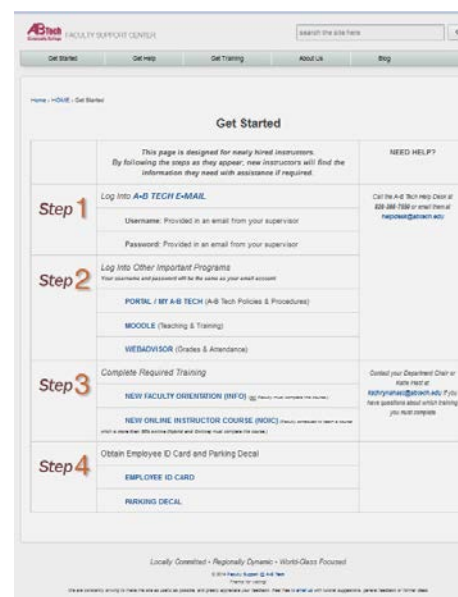
Acclimating new faculty members to the college through a virtual onboarding process means faculty can access information quickly and easily, on their schedules. Hiring new faculty doesn't always go as planned, but with online resources always ready to be deployed, a new hire can get started any time, any day of the week. The online courses Introducing New Faculty to Our World (INFO) and New Online Instructor Course (NOIC) are the perfect starting points. The team
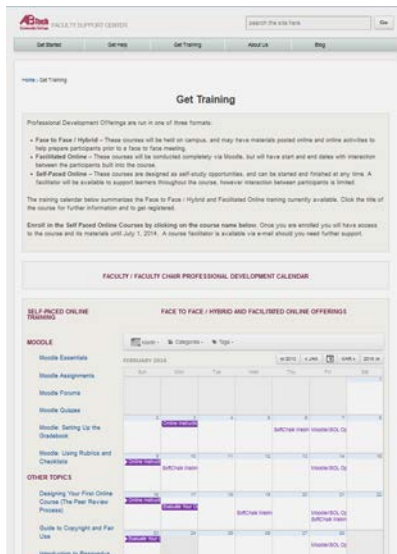
says it's easy to assume that because someone is a good nurse or welder that they'll feel comfortable teaching their craft. But equipping industry experts with pedagogical and classroom tools, as well as other campus resources, in an online format helps ensure new faculty get the support they need and feel more confident in the classroom. Concurrent with the overhaul of the onboarding process, the team seized the opportunity to convert some of their professional development course topics to an online format. They are currently offering three variations: self-paced, facilitated online, and facilitated hybrid courses. Even within the self-paced courses there are opportunities for faculty to receive feedback from a mentor. For those who prefer in-person assistance, the college offers an open computer lab on Fridays to allow new faculty to drop by and receive help from A-B Tech's team of instructional designers.

Since implementation began in January, Barb and Katie said the response to the new onboarding process has been remarkable. "We're hearing crickets…it's been phenomenal!" All joking aside, the resulting calm on previously overflowing email and voice mail in-boxes is a great sign that intentional, effective communication paired with one-stop shopping for faculty support can help new faculty navigate uncharted waters much more successfully.

A-B Tech's Faculty Support Website:

➤ http://facultysupport.abtech.edu brings together a host of resources for A-B Tech faculty. The FSC team launched a mini-marketing campaign to encourage faculty members to visit and use the site. Lollipops with the web address attached were distributed at a recent faculty update meeting.

To learn more about A-B Tech's New Faculty Onboarding process, contact:
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Related NCCCS Resources:

➤ NC-NET offers an Adjunct Faculty Toolkit at http://www.nc-net.info/toolkit/

➤ The new NC-ACCESS website offers support for student development personnel but also contains a FERPA Toolkit with useful tips for faculty: www.nc-access.info