Experience of Co-facilitating the PLC Group (2018-19)
Focus: Virtual Teamwork Professional Learning Community
The University of Texas at Arlington

UNIVERSITY OF **TEXAS** ARLINGTON

Professional Learning Community

Academic Year 2018-2019

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We, Peggy and Nila, were the co-facilitators of the Teamwork in the Online Courses group of Professional Learning Community (PLC) at The University of Texas at Arlington in 2018-19. This document summarizes our process and reflection of what we did to facilitate the group successfully. We hope this handout can serve as a guideline if you need help in facilitating a group in future.

Aim: To keep the group of faculty and staff intact, motivated, and on task, and to provide the support.

Structure of our group:

Total number of people: Nine members, which included two co-facilitators.

Affiliation: Members were from 6 different colleges and schools: College of Science, Education, Liberal Arts, Business, Nursing and Health Innovation, and School of Social Work.

Approach/Process:

·   Meetings and special events were scheduled in advance. There were a total of eight meetings (4 in Fall semester, and 4 in Spring). All meetings were with lunch provided to participants. Each meeting was two hours long. In addition, the group also met virtually once or twice via Zoom.

·   The meetings in Fall were focused on planning the team based project and Spring for actually implementing the team work in a course.

·   We, the co-facilitators, met virtually about a week ahead of each meeting (via Zoom) to plan the structure and activities for the session.

·   All members were provided three mini-books about virtual teamwork published by Harvard Business Review. Members took turns to discuss the books and some research articles during the meetings.

The Virtual Manager Collection (3 Books) (HBR 20-Minute Manager Series)

·   Here is the list of some of the **topics** that we focused on in the meetings.

- Strategies of forming teams
- Leadership and fellowship
- Importance of communication
- Students success and challenges
- Digital tools for collaboration
- Assessment

·   **Format of the meetings**: Each meeting started with informal ice breakers. This was followed by participant contributions, reflections, and questions from each member if they had any. Members also took turns in taking meeting minutes

·   **Guest speakers** from on and off campus (virtually) were invited to cover some specific topics.   Here are some of the examples of topics covered by guest speakers.

- Open Education Resources
- Assessment of Teamwork (e.g., rubrics)
- Qualtrics Surveys
- Microsoft TEAMs
- Institutional effectiveness

We used google drive (created folders) and Microsoft Teams to share the information among the members.

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The Spring teamwork project planning report was due by the end of Fall semester. In the Spring semester each member executed the team based project at least in one of his/her courses. The final report and reflection was due at the end of Spring semester by May 31st.

Incentive for members

Lunches, books, laptop bag, Online Learning Consortium workshops, $500 educational incentive

Conclusion of the PLC Program

·   At the end of the academic year in Spring the university hosted a half day long the colloquium in which all the members briefly presented information about their respective teamwork project. There was also a guest speaker invited in the colloquium.

·   The PLC program concluded with the Provost's luncheon in which all the members were recognized and given a certificate of completion.

Successes

- There were many first timers and many repeaters.
- Most of the PLC members want to come back.
- Good attendance and morale.
- Meaningful projects were completed that aligned with faculty's interest and teaching or staff contexts.
- Knowledge-sharing: Cross-pollination of ideas across disciplines with a common focus.
- We also discussed ways to integrate these ideas into our new (to us!) LMS: Canvas

Challenges

- Many members found the assessment of teamwork challenging.
- Most members had to step back from original plans.
- Most of the members could not do IRB even though had planned in the beginning.
- Some members did not know what courses they would be assigned to teach until the start of the Spring semester.

Examples of Posters
There are two examples in the Google Drive. Click here to access them.

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Nila's Personal reflection: I enjoyed it. Was first time experience of facilitating an year long program. Would have been difficult if had done alone, but doing with a partner (Peggy) made it easy. Helpful because it was a top down approach. Andrew Clark connected with QEP program under the provost's office.

Peggy's Personal Reflection:

- Faculty who teach online are often working through more emerging ideas with tools they have never used or are searching for solutions that are unique to the online environment.
- Digital teaching is not for all faculty. Some are more open to it.
- PLC is a self-selected group of faculty. This is an advantage but can be a bit limiting to growth of numbers of participants.
- The "ongoing conversation" fostered over many years is a powerful facet of the PLC community.

Future Direction

Lunch with PLC alumni: share their experiences
Mentor –mentee relation
IRB
Assessment

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