

## ICED 2020 proceedings:

# Getting it right: A review of the new UFV faculty development program

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### Abstract

In 2018, after three years of development and obtaining approvals, the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) at the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) officially began its new professional development program for newly hired full-time faculty. It comprised two nine-week multi-modal courses delivered over the fall and winter semesters. Faculty participating would receive one course release from teaching each semester to ensure they had time to fully engage with the program. This paper provides a brief summary of the research conducted on the first year of the program and the modifications that were implemented as the program moved to its second year.

### 1 Introduction

The University of the Fraser Valley is a regionally-focused and teaching-intensive degree granting postsecondary institution with five campuses in the scenic Fraser Valley area of British Columbia, Canada. It has 15,000 students, mostly domestic, including 6 percent Indigenous students and approximately 13 percent international students.

In 2018, 14 faculty members volunteered to participate in the pilot of the new faculty professional development program. It should be noted that although most of these faculty members were newly hired to UFV, the majority had five years of full or part-time teaching experience at other institutions. They were not new to teaching but new to UFV. The participants were from a variety of different departments, including Communications, Health Science, Adult Education, Criminology, Science, Business, Social Science, and Mathematics and Statistics. As the program was new and we were confident of its success, we also accepted into the program two full-time faculty members who had taught at UFV for two years and were struggling in their teaching practice. At the request of their dean, they were placed in the program. This decision would turn out to have implications for the program and its members.

The new faculty professional development program was loosely modelled on one in which the researcher had previously participated when she worked at another institution (Rodgers, Christie & Wideman, 2014). The UFV program focused on topics specific to teaching at UFV and was developed around three pillars: Relationships, Resilience and Reflection. While the content varied each week, the program purposefully provided opportunities for these new faculty members to engage with each other (build relationships); share and learn from one another's own teaching experiences (gain resilience); and write weekly journal entries about what they have learned in the program, from each other or from their own teaching that week (practice reflection). In addition,

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knowledge was gained through weekly topics that included Indigenization and ways of knowing, adult learners, active and learner-centred teaching, experiential learning, culturally responsive and inclusive teaching, assessment, rubrics and ethical grading practices, academic integrity, the pedagogy of hope, resistance to learning, outcome and concept-based curriculum, and building community. The program modelled good teaching practice in a variety of modes, including in-class, blended, and synchronous and asynchronous online learning experiences. Faculty were provided with required readings and/or other activities to complete before coming to class. The total time required was approximately 5-6 hours per week.

## **2 Research methods**

Research was conducted on the impact of the pilot program using a variety of methods including a pre- and post- self-efficacy survey (Schwarzer, Schmitz & Daytner, 1999), a pre- and post-Philosophies of Adult Education inventory (Labr.net, 2018), participant evaluations and observations by program leaders.

The self-efficacy survey asked participants to respond on their confidence level in 10 areas, such as being able to teach all subjects required, maintain positive relationships with students, reach difficult students, address students' needs, maintain composure and teach well, exert a positive influence, creatively cope with system restraints, motivate students, and carry out innovative projects even when opposed by skeptical colleagues. In comparing the pre- and post- survey results, there were gains in the Exactly True response in every area ranging from nine to 40 percent. The lowest increase was for the question, "I am convinced that, as time goes by, I will continue to become more and more capable of helping to address my students' needs." The highest increase occurred for the question, "I know that I can motivate my students to participate in innovative projects."

The Philosophies of Adult Education inventory, originally developed by L.M. Zinn (1983), aligns teaching and learning perspectives with adult education philosophies. There are 15 items in the inventory and respondents are required to complete a sentence choosing one of five options provided. Respondents can be aligned with philosophies that include Liberal (intellectual development), Behaviorist (behaviour change), Progressive (problem solving), Humanist (self-actualization), or Radical (social change) philosophies. Faculty can also be strong in more than one philosophy.

Participants were asked to complete the inventory before the program and after its completion. Six of our participants indicated changes in their adult education philosophies. Three moved from Behaviorist to Progressive/Radical or reduced their level of Behaviorist. One participant who was originally Strong Radical moved to Strong Radical / Behaviorist. Two other participants saw their scores for Behaviorist increase.

In addition, participants were asked to complete an evaluation of the program and the instructors at the end of the two courses. On a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being high, most respondents indicated either a 4 or 5 in most of the categories regarding the program. These included challenging existing thoughts, engaging their learning, gaining multiple perspectives, deepening their understanding of teaching and learning issues, and becoming aware of their own strengths and weaknesses.

The evaluation of the instructors averaged 4.5 out of 5, with questions ranging from ensuring an inclusive learning environment, organization of materials, clear objectives, relevant topics, use of a variety of teaching methods, stimulation of critical thinking, provision of feedback, and use of technology.

Participants were also asked to rate their own participation in the course. Most rated themselves a 4 out of 5 in areas of attendance, level of interest, and effort.

Selected participant comments included:

- Loved this course. Loved meeting other new faculty. Instructive to engage in discussion and hear other points of view.
- Very valuable program for new faculty.
- Too much reading.
- Strength was in creating an environment for us to share our experiences.
- Overall, a great use of my time.
- Really enjoyed the past year.
- It felt top down and agenda-driven.

### **3 Challenges**

There were challenges during the first year of the program. Originally, it was intended that an overall assessment for participants include the development of a basic teaching portfolio, one where participants could begin collecting artifacts which they could use for probation and tenure purposes. The participants were not interested in any evaluation of their progress as they were not sure who else would access the materials. Although it had been stated numerous times that this program was for their benefit and did not, in any way, overlap with any administrative evaluation process, participants were unsure. The researcher attributes this to the participants who were struggling in their teaching practice and were in the program at the request of their dean. These participants were fearful because their positions were potentially at risk, and that fear leached into the program participants. However, when analyzing the feedback from the participants, overall it was extremely positive. While fear seemed to underline some of the discussions in class, it was not apparent in the feedback from participants.

### **4 Modifications**

It was apparent that the program was an overall success. Faculty felt supported; they built a network with each other that has led to collaborative research projects, friendly connections and a broader use of teaching techniques, modalities and technologies. After analyzing the data, several modifications to the pilot were made. The name was changed to UFV Launch, as it was easier to remember. More faculty partners were included as co-instructors in the program. One class per semester was left open so that participants could choose a topic they wanted to explore. The requirement for a formal evaluation was dropped but participants were required to do the readings /activities each week and post to an insight journal and wiki. The number of participants doubled the second year, resulting in having two classes per week, one morning and one in the evening to accommodate schedules. The final change, and probably the most important, was the decision to only include new faculty members. Those faculty struggling with their teaching practice would be provided support through different means.

### **5 Conclusion**

While this program cannot be equivocally aligned to faculty improving their self-efficacy or changing their teaching philosophy, it was reported that it was a contributor to many of the participants feeling supported and improving their teaching readiness in their first year. The classmates closely bonded with each other, shared stories and successes, and further expanded

their learning in the field of postsecondary teaching. The interdisciplinary nature of the program enabled participants to engage in topics from multiple perspectives – there are a variety of options to address most questions. It laid the groundwork for a long teaching career at the university. The program continues to be delivered at UFV.

## References

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