

**Learning From Experience: “Developing Portraits of Practice:
 CASE RECORDS”**

A. Project Title: *Your kingdom for a few words?*

Faculty and Future Faculty Learning Community

B. Project Overview: *Tell the world what you’re doing. 75 Words or less!*

The Faculty and Future Faculty Learning Community aims to improve the teaching **of** and the teaching **by** teaching assistants. We bring together faculty and teaching assistants from many disciplines to discuss improving the TA orientation program and the college teaching course required at KSU. The aim is to use these vehicles to teach graduate TAs to teach better. Wwe hope this will lead to better teaching in the undergraduate classes that the TAs are responsible for.

C. Case Recorder(s): Identify the person(s) preparing the case record on behalf of the LC. *Who are you?*

The case recorder is Albert L. Ingram, Associate Professor of Instructional Technology and co-leader of the learning community. At the same time, all members of the community have had a hand in preparing the case record.

D. Learning Community Members, units, roles:

List your community members, their units or disciplines, and roles in the LC. *Who are core members and associates (key people involved in the community project other than core members) of your LC? What experiences do each bring to the community and project?*

Community Member Name	Unit/ Title	Role/s in the Community
1. Albert Ingram	Instructional Technology	Co-leader

2. Jerry Feezel	Communication Studies, ONTAP Director, Research and Graduate Studies	Co-leader
3. John Stalvey	Biological Sciences	Core Group
4. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak	Special Education	Core Group
5. Raynette Smith	Theatre	Core Group
6. Beverly Reed	Mathematics	
7. Rebecca Chism	Modern and Classical Languages	
8. Jennifer Craun	Graduate Student, Art	
9. Mellisa Muller	Graduate Student, Psychology	
10. Betsy Justice	Graduate Student, Educational Psychology	Core Group
11. Mandy Brooks	Graduate Student, Instructional Technology	Core Group
12.		

Other comments about LC members and supporters:

Another key associate is Mary Lou Holly, Director of the Faculty Professional Development Center at Kent State University.

The members of F-Cubed were chosen in several ways. First, faculty who are or recently were involved in their departments' college teaching courses were asked to participate, while trying to ensure the representation of a wide variety of disciplines. Second, three graduate students who have been involved in existing efforts to train teaching assistants at Kent State University (KSU) were included. In addition, another graduate student has a part-time placement with the community to handle key tasks such as website development and maintenance.

The goal has been to bring diverse viewpoints about both teaching and teaching assistants: faculty and graduate assistants, various academic disciplines, and so on. The mix is crucial for the success of the community.

E. Background & Context:

Briefly describe your Learning Community Project and the context within which you undertake it. *What do you hope to achieve? How will this contribute to learning at your institution? What desired ending(s) would you like for the story of your LC and its project? What types of institutional support do you have or would like?*

This learning community (LC) focuses on the issues of improving the teaching **of**

teaching assistants and the teaching *by* teaching assistants. Teaching assistants are a central part of KSU's undergraduate education, especially during the first two years of college. It is vital that they provide the best possible learning experiences for freshman and sophomores. All teaching assistants at KSU go through an extensive orientation, called ONTAP, (Orienting New Teaching Assistants Program) before the semester begins. This orientation is fairly broad and deep compared to what is offered by many other universities. Due to time limitations, however, there are still many opportunities for improvement. In addition, all departments at KSU that use TAs are required to give a course on college teaching to the TAs. This course is usually offered to doctoral students in each field. There is little coordination or cross-fertilization among departments and faculty who offer this course, thus the topics covered and the quality of the courses may vary widely from department to department. A key goal of this community is to improve the teaching of the college teaching course both directly in the versions taught by FLC members and indirectly through influencing others who teach it in other departments.

The learning community is composed of faculty members who are or have been involved in the college teaching courses in their departments as well as several graduate students/teaching assistants, many of whom have been leaders in ONTAP.

To be successful, this community will have to have an impact on both the professional development of teaching assistants through ONTAP and the departmental college teaching courses and on the learning experienced by students who are taught at KSU by the teaching assistants. Two ways that this could happen are 1. through the improvement of the college teaching courses offered by community members and 2. by supplying online materials that will be available to all teaching assistants at KSU (as well as anyone else inside or outside of the university).

The context of the learning community includes a recent commitment of Kent State University to the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP). The first university-wide goal for KSU's AQIP initiative is to "foster a learner-centered environment for student success." This Learning Community is directly related to making that happen.

When the current incarnation of this learning community comes to an end, we would like to see three major outcomes. First, we hope that the teaching as well as the reflection about teaching of those involved will have improved significantly. Second, we want to move beyond those directly involved and affect teaching and learning more generally at KSU through providing information to the university community at large. This will be done through a website, where we may provide information about teaching and assessment strategies and well as instructional modules to teach specific skills and information about college teaching. Third, we hope to make this Faculty Learning Community an ongoing body that outlives specific members and projects and keeps adding to the body of knowledge about teaching at KSU.

F. Description of your early work, planning and preparations.

Describe the preliminary work of the learning community as you prepare for your community project and for attending your Learning Institute. *What were the key components in your planning and preparation for your LC (Roles? Methods? Timelines? Coordinating schedules?)? What were key issues and concerns, and, how did you sort them out? What were the key successes and what impact have they had? Are there any vignettes that illustrate these?*

The community began as a grant proposal in the Spring of 2002. When the initial Readiness Grant was approved, members were recruited and planning began. These processes culminated in a meeting among many of the members listed above and in the Implementation Grant proposal. As we approached the Fall semester (and with the expectation that the Implementation Grant would be funded), a kickoff retreat was held in September, 2002. At that time members received a number of books to serve as resources:

- *How People Learn*
- *Knowing What Students Know*
- *Deep Learning for a Digital Age*

At the initial kickoff meeting, team building activities were conducted, goals discussed, and books and other materials distributed.

During the Fall 2002, semester, approximately half of the learning community attended the OLN kickoff meeting in Columbus. Internally, we have met every other week, alternating days to make it possible for most people to attend at least part of the time. Among the topics discussed at these meetings were developing a syllabus for a course, instructional strategies used by some individuals, and learner styles that could affect our teaching. We are currently developing a model syllabus, a database of instructional strategies, and a research project on learner styles.

G. Description and learning about your community building and project development.

Describe early phases of building your community and developing the project. *What key challenges, problems, solutions, struggles, and failures do you have and how do you handle them? What did they – or will they - lead to? What successes have you enjoyed to date? Are there any vignettes of potential consequence or impacts that you can share? How are you utilizing the Learning Communities information provided by Milt Cox on October 15?*

The model for this LC differs from the standard one used at Miami University in a couple of important ways. First, they have a formal application process and take only some of those who apply to be in an LC. For this first round, we actively recruited people for the F3 group. (In contrast, the Collaborative Tech group was formed initially out of the Technology Advisory Committee to the FPDC, with others added later to form the LC.)

Second, at Miami, individual members usually pursue their own individual projects within the LC. Presumably, the LC provides support (social, emotional, intellectual, monetary, etc.), but they do not necessarily have any collective goals. Two of KSU's LCs are different in that they are focusing on group projects. Collaborative Technologies is starting to focus on a few interesting online collaboration tools. In F3, we are focusing on developing group goals and working towards them collaboratively. Three possibilities are 1. model syllabi for the college teaching courses, 2. a database of instructional strategies used by community members and others, and 3. instructional materials to teach teaching assistants (and others) knowledge and skills relevant to teaching.

The F-Cubed LC as being more similar to the "communities of practice" described by

Wenger, et. al. date. These communities are more “organic” than the Miami-style communities. There are some practical consequences to that. First, we are having difficulty in buckling down and actually accomplishing things. We need to have deliverables that come out of group work, not just individual efforts. Second, Wenger and his co-authors describe different levels of participation that aren’t really seen in the Miami model. There, everyone is part of the core group. Here, we are already seeing some differentiation of people into core and peripheral groups. We can use that to our advantage by pulling in some more peripheral people to help out and maybe become part of the core later. Finally, we aim at having F3 become self-sustaining, with a gradual turnover over time. The problems we want to address with F3 are long-term, so it would be good to develop a long-term group that maintains itself even as people leave and enter.

The FLC is using both electronic resources and face-to-face meetings to further its goals. We are currently meeting for lunch and conversation every two weeks on alternate Mondays and Tuesdays. In addition, we have scheduled more intensive working sessions once a month for the Spring semester. Our principle means of electronic communications are 1. a community listserv and 2. the software program Groove. Groove is becoming steadily more important to us as we exchange files and information, schedule meetings, and work on documents together. This has led to several of us using Groove in our teaching, including the College Teaching course.

Among the accomplishments of the FLC to date include

- Developing new resources for improving the syllabi of college courses.
- Resources for handling difficult situations
- Resources on classroom assessment techniques
- Starting a database of instructional strategies for use in various classes

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This is the end of Part 1.

Take your completed DRAFT of your “*Portraits of Practice: Case Records*” Part 1 to your Learning Institute and send the final version to OLN by February 1, 2003.

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Part 2

H. Description and reflections on implementation.

Describe the test or trial and interactive phases of your project including impact on learning. Use critical incidents and vignettes to illustrate the action of your community’s project. *What are key challenges, problems, solutions, struggles, and failures, and how do you handle them? What have been your key successes? How have you leveraged these to your advantage?*

I. Key Resources: *Who and what are the people, organizations, materials, websites, and other resources you utilized? What types of support did you receive from your departments, colleges, administration? Of all resources, which were essential?*

J. Discussion:

This is your opportunity to capture the conversations among LC members as all of you reflect critically on the community and your project. *As you reflect back on the preliminary stages of your community and its focus area and how it has evolved and developed over time, what are critical incidents, key questions and junctures that made a difference in how the community and your project evolved? What worked and why do you think it worked? What didn't work and why do you think it didn't work? What are your overall conclusions?*

What are the next steps in the cycle of reflective practice? The next steps may not be predicted and take you in another fruitful direction.

*How might your **Case Record** be used as a resource for other individuals and communities?*

K. What questions/issues might you pose to the reader of your **Case Record** to help in their efforts?

This is the end of Part 2 “*Developing Portraits of Practice: Case Records.*”

Take your complete: “*Developing Portraits of Practice: Case Records,*” including Part 1 and Part 2, to the June 18, 2003, meeting at Columbus State Community College.

Your final “*Developing Portraits of Practice: Case Records*” (Parts 1 and 2) are to be emailed to OLN no later than June 30, 2003.
