

Three Early Indicators from the Teaching Success Movement

Faculty Guild
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Foreword

The student success narrative has captured higher education’s attention – and with good cause. Dozens of interventions and initiatives have taken hold within and across our country’s institutions of higher learning. Each effort touts positive and promising outcomes.

As Dr. Gail Mellow, president of LaGuardia Community College, and her co-authors outline in their book *Taking College Teaching Seriously: Pedagogy Matters!*, student success efforts to date have been centered on either institutional structures like advising systems, or curricular structures like pathways and curriculum alignment. Dr. Mellow argues that a third area of the student success ecosystem requires our attention: the classroom.

It is without question that faculty spend the most time with students. It is also fair to say that most student success initiatives require faculty participation and, in some cases, changes in the classroom on an ongoing basis to have the intended impact. The techniques and tools that faculty members use to help students transition to college and feel included in the classroom – whether face-to-face, online or in some combination – as well as access higher order thinking, among many other goals, are critical to helping students succeed in college and beyond. As a result, faculty need an integrated framework to support their efforts and leverage evidence-based practices in their daily teaching.

We believe higher education has an opportunity to reinforce its student success efforts by investing in faculty members and in the hard work that takes place in the classroom. We believe now is the time to refocus on the power of teaching. Through teaching success, we will see a logical and natural connection to student success.

The data from the spring 2018 academic term that is shared in this inaugural report are instrumental in introducing insights that higher education can leverage to offer support and community to faculty members, especially those who commit to an ongoing practice of quality improvement in teaching. It is an important step forward with many exciting opportunities ahead.

David Yaskin

CEO and Founder, Faculty Guild

Faculty Guild Approach

The Faculty Guild model is based on research and analyses led by Dr. Gail Mellow and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Kresge Foundation. The project involved more than a dozen colleges and hundreds of faculty since 2010.

As detailed in *Taking College Teaching Seriously: Pedagogy Matters!*, the model is rooted in a standard change cycle of: plan, do, reflect, act – all predicated on the notion that professional practice improvement requires self-reflection.

Faculty Guild brings together situated learning, data-driven visualizations and faculty communities of practice. We move the conversation from isolated professional development to a shared, ongoing experience centered on a shared language of pedagogy.

How does it work?

Institutions sponsor individual faculty members to participate in a two-term Faculty Guild fellowship. Our fellows learn through a process of reflection and application, guided by a trained facilitator, a community of colleagues and easy-to-use software. Fellows are grouped by academic discipline within or across institutions and work together online in small groups called teaching “circles.”

- **Weekly engagement.** Fellows use the mobile-friendly Faculty Guild [platform](#) to describe their goals, teaching practices and evidence of student learning for a recent activity. They reflect on what did or did not work and how they could improve – analyzing their own instruction through a framework of research-based teaching practices.
- **Expert facilitation.** A trained facilitator leads the circle through an appreciative inquiry model – amplifying reflection and learning. The facilitator provides weekly feedback to each fellow, providing contextualized guidance and offering new approaches.
- **Cohort learning.** Circle members support each other with weekly peer feedback. They share challenges and successes and suggest ways to strengthen teaching practices.
- **Direct application.** Fellows consider the feedback and apply new ideas in the classroom. Then, they receive more feedback in subsequent weeks on the applied approaches.
- **Data generation through tagging.** Facilitator and fellows “tag” their actual teaching practices using research-validated categories of good teaching. The tags flow into a visual representation of their individual professional growth and learning.
- **Outcomes analysis.** Non-evaluative data provide fellows with visibility into the teaching practices they employ in their classroom. Anonymized data enable administrators to see growth and analyze the impact of teaching on student outcomes by institutional and student characteristics and teaching approaches.

Question 1:

Will faculty participate in sustained professional development?

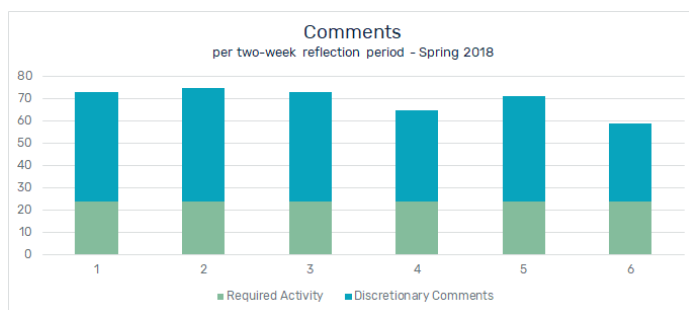
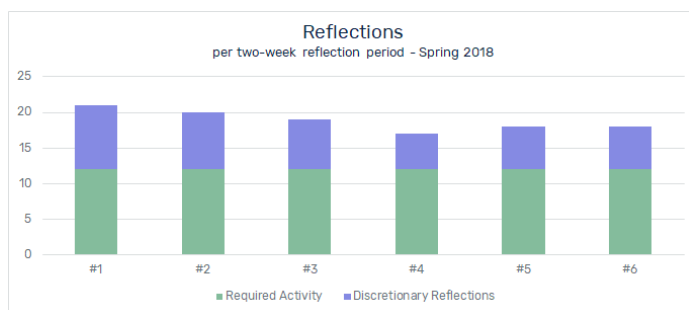
Early Indicator:

Yes

Too often, campus leaders are skeptical of their faculty's willingness to engage in a sustained personalized community of practice. To accommodate this concern, professional development typically takes the form of pre-packaged online modules from a third-party vendor or in-person workshops that are terrific at introducing a new idea but rarely have a significant effect on teaching and classroom outcomes. Learning communities, enjoyed by faculty, have limited accountability, with very mixed results for impacting the classroom. Course redesign, while more measurable with good change in student outcomes, is often too intense in terms of time commitment and expense to impact most faculty.

The Faculty Guild approach is highly personalized, faculty-driven and embedded in active teaching. In other words, faculty drive the focus of their own process improvement by reflecting on their teaching *while they are doing it*. Fellows are accountable for their own improvement in a positive, non-evaluative, peer-driven experience.

In spring 2018, Faculty Guild expected that fellows would engage for one to two hours during each of six reflection periods. During each two-week reflection period, fellows were asked to post a brief reflection about classroom activities, provide feedback to others and consider peer feedback.



During the term, fellows exceeded the program requirements with higher-than-expected levels of activity. As noted in the chart below, fellows regularly went “above and beyond” both in posting their reflections and in commenting on their peers’ reflections. Importantly, this activity was sustained over the term, dipping slightly during spring break weeks.

This sustained practice was consistent among all Faculty Guild fellows in spring 2018, with no discernible differences between full-time and part-time faculty or those from four-year and two-year institutions.

Question 2:

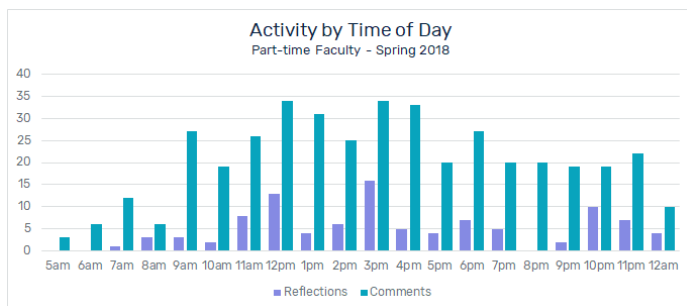
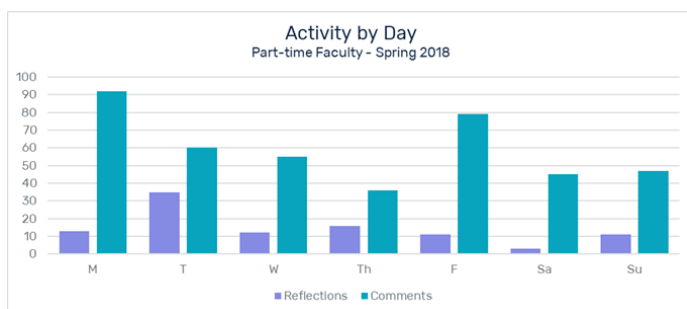
Will adjunct faculty have time to participate?

Early Indicator:

Yes

According to the American Association of University Professors, “non-tenure track positions of all types now account for over 70 percent of all instructional staff appointments in American higher education.” Many adjuncts and part-time lecturers teach at multiple institutions – making it difficult to fully leverage resources like a Center for Teaching and Learning.

The Faculty Guild approach removes the logistical barriers to professional development that may be encountered by a part-time faculty member. Fellows find the web-based software platform easy to use for both documenting reflections and sharing feedback with peers. The platform is mobile-friendly and available 24/7. As a result, part-time faculty are able to participate fully in sustained professional development on their own schedule.



In spring 2018, part-time faculty were deeply engaged. While the option of when (days of week and times of day) to participate was self-determined, fellows showed no specific preference for participating over the weekend vs. during the week, or in the evening vs. during the traditional workday. Like all faculty, adjuncts appreciated the opportunity to engage in their community of practice when it aligned with their windows of availability.

Reflections are the more time-consuming task, and each fellow only needs to post one; whereas a fellow may post many comments. The peak day for posting reflections was Tuesday, since the

reflections were expected to be available to peers on Wednesday. Most reflections were posted in the early afternoons and evenings. Comments were spread more evenly throughout the week and throughout the day.

Question 3:

Will faculty find the practice of reflecting and receiving feedback to be valuable?

Early Indicator:

Yes

Faculty satisfaction was high among those surveyed at the end of their first term. Overall, most participants saw high value in the fellowship's methodology, which is centered on reflection, feedback and assessment. A post-term survey indicates the fellowship had both a positive and direct impact on the way fellows approached their classrooms.



Several fellows volunteered additional information, which indicated their interest in the experience and commitment to continuing to work with the Faculty Guild model.

“The facilitator was really good, and I’m looking forward to making growth ideas actionable!”

“I have a 30-minute drive home after teaching my courses on Monday nights. On my way, I always reflect on how effective I was. Until now, I had no one to share my reflection with.”

“[The facilitator] did an excellent job drilling down to the very heart of the matter. Her feedback made me re-think my methods and allowed me to develop growth ideas. I had a great experience.”

About This Report

We are excited to help lead an important effort in higher education – one centered on the vital actions that take place in the classroom. According to the Educational Advisory Board, full-time students spend 225 hours with their faculty members each term (as compared to *one hour* spent with advisors in a term). In every class, every day, faculty members can make connections, inspire learning and help students navigate a complex, evolving world.

At Faculty Guild, we believe in the power of continual reflection. Every week, through a structured routine of describing teaching activities, tagging the evidence-based practices employed and engaging in community discussion – a wealth of insights about real-world teaching are produced. To ensure a private place for growth and professional learning, personal data produced by fellows is confidential and not shared with anyone outside of the circle, unless done so directly by the fellow.

Faculty Guild does draw anonymized, de-identified insights about teaching practices and the use of evidence-based instructional practices. This inaugural report reflects the real-life reflections of nearly 150 class sessions across one academic term from two-year and four-year institutions, spanning disciplines across the humanities and STEM.

In the future, as the Faculty Guild community grows, we anticipate sharing more granular insights into how teaching styles are occurring and changing across a variety of dimensions, including discipline, class sizes, course levels, institution types and the teaching experience level of faculty members – as well as the related impact on student outcomes. As a result, we hope to contribute to the growing scholarship and national dialogue around professional development practices and the impact of purposeful teaching on student success.

Gratitude

We know that helping higher education re-center its attention to supporting the important work that takes place in the classroom is not an easy feat. It's through the collective impact of institutions, foundations, faculty members, students and private organizations that we create space for a Teaching Success Movement.

A special note of thanks to our founding institutional partners and their participating faculty members, including Immaculata University, Jefferson University, Johns Hopkins University, Montgomery College and Towson University.

About Faculty Guild

Faculty Guild believes purposeful teaching is vital to student success. We offer a multi-term fellowship where faculty members bolster their existing teaching practices, supported by a circle of peers and a professional facilitator, in an online environment. Fellows learn by reflecting on their own teaching, not from disconnected, general guidance. And through analytics, fellows see how their teaching behaviors change over time. In turn, their institutions receive aggregated, non-identified data to measure return on investment. Our approach has been tested by hundreds of faculty members and is based on more than six years of research, originally led by Dr. Gail Mellow. This method has shown to revitalize teaching and learning experiences, creating a lasting impact on the institution.



Faculty Guild

3033 Wilson Blvd., Suite E185

Arlington, VA 22201

www.facultyguild.org

[@facultyguild](https://twitter.com/facultyguild)