

Rise, Teach, Learn - Season 1, Episode 8

Conversations on Student Success

00:03

We acknowledge and are mindful that CSU Chico stands on lands that were originally occupied by the first people of this area, the Mechoopda, and we recognize their distinctive spiritual relationship with this land and the waters that run through campus. We are humbled that our campus resides upon sacred lands that will sustain the Mechoopda people for centuries.

00:27

Welcome to the Rise, Teach, Learn podcast. I am Dr. Chiara Ferrari, Director of Faculty Development at Chico State. And we are happy to make this resource available to our campus community and beyond. The podcast is hosted by Dr. Jamie Linn Gunderson. And she will engage in timely conversations with faculty, staff, and students and give you a taste of the Chico experience. Subscribe to our podcast and explore the many resources available on our website. Thank you for listening.

01:00

Hello, and welcome to Rise, Teach, Learn. I'm your host Jamie Gunderson. In our eighth episode entitled conversations on student success. I along with Dr. Chiara Ferrari, and the faculty learning community leaders discuss this year's collaboration and learning.

01:18

Okay, so I am here with Dr. Chiara Ferrari, the director of faculty development, and we are in our final episode of our podcast for spring 2021. So I wanted to kind of highlight some of the really cool faculty learning communities that have taken place over the course of the year. So Chiara, thank you for being here with me. Can you give us a little rundown on some of these great projects?

01:44

Absolutely. Thank you for this opportunity. I think it's important at the end of the semester, actually the end of the year, to to give a sense of what we have offered, what faculty were able to meet and discuss. And I was a little bit concerned at the beginning of last summer, because with COVID, and being virtual, I wasn't really sure if we could offer the same amount of faculty learning community if they could be equally impactful. So you know, the general concerns that we all had, when COVID hit. I was also concerned because I was a new director of faculty development. So I was new to this, a little bit new to this world. But I'm very glad that we were able to offer five different learning communities, three primarily focused on student success. So one, led by Dr. Kim Jaxon is the digital pedagogy. Another one led by Dr. Eric way singer and that's one that it's very close, because it's about closing the equity gaps. And this is something that was financed or funded by GI2025. And it's all really about looking at data about student success and trying to improve the student experience in all our classes. And the last

one is theory and practice of teaching. first year students are led by Dr. Ellie hurdle. And this one focused specifically on how we can better serve first students. So these three digital pedagogy, closing the equity gaps, FLC, and theory and practice of teaching first year students were primarily geared towards student success we offer to other communities. One is a faculty writing community that it's mostly focused on scholarship and helping faculty produce their scholarship in a time where everyone was overwhelmed. And it was just important perhaps to find a group of people that could hold us accountable for our own scholarship, just a group of people with whom we could just discuss struggles, ideas, research plans, and another one is a chair learning community. So I am happy that faculty development can support chairs. This has been a particularly hard year for for chair in terms of scheduling in terms of changing pedagogy in terms of having to communicate to their faculty, drastically drastic and quick changes that were coming from the institution. So I really want to take a moment to thank all the department chairs about the incredible work that they have done and I am happy that we could offer a learning community for new chairs who were probably struggling even more than regular chairs this year. So I look forward to have the leads of these faculties, learning communities, share some of the experience they had with this group, basically to really learn what our faculty struggling with in what can we do to support to better support our faculty. At the same time, how can we better serve our students through innovative pedagogy use of technology and end use of data?

05:23

The first FLC we will highlight really aligns to our strategic priority of equity, diversity and inclusion. The FLC entitled closing equity gaps is led by Dr. Erik Wasinger, a professor of chemistry in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. Eric, can you tell us a little more about the goal of this FLC and what you and faculty learned through this collaboration?

05:44

Sure. Thanks for having me, Jamie. So at the beginning of our FLC, we had Kate McCarthy come in, and describe for us what our university looks like in terms of equity gaps. And quite frankly, it wasn't a pretty picture. Part of that was defining what an equity gap is, and how we might see unequal outcomes from equal types of students. And that alone was kind of a disturbing phrase for many of us to hear. From there, we went through, we did some literature searching and looking at what it means to simply examine an equity gap sort of gap gazing, and realize that perhaps just looking at a gas not enough, and we need to actually do something about it. And so we then started to look at how we could address common causes of equity gaps. Now, that's a big topic, and certainly things that are way beyond what we're capable of doing. And so that was part of our conversation is, what will we try to tackle as individual faculty members or as colleges? What is it that we can do to help mitigate this problem? From there, we took a look at the data dashboard, the new data dashboard that IR has created, we've gone through and looked at our own individual classes, several classes over a period of time, what equity gaps Do we have, and then start to begin to address where may they originate from, ideally starting to get a handle on perhaps things that we can make a change in our classroom, we also invited a few faculty from the past that have address some of this problem in their classes. And so they gave us some wonderful tips and ideas on things that we might try to implement. And that led to essentially the group just developing a plan for mitigating equity gaps, the ones that they have some control over. And we a lot of learning happened. And what we found was that the data for the dashboard is a really great starting place. And if you haven't spent some time digging into that data, I'm a data junkie. And so

it's a great place to go. It's a great place to start to address this problem. But it's an absolutely terrible ending place. It's just not good enough to absolutely handle these kinds of problems. And it's not because it's not a good thing. It's just that the data are pretty granular. And there's absolutely no context. And so many of us saw, for example, equity gaps increase in our classes, this semester of the campfire. Well, that's not surprising, is it? Now is that something that I'm going to try and tackle? Well, the campfire is the imminent danger is over, we have long term issues. Maybe I deal with that in a different way that I deal with students dropping out of the courses, due to more recent events, say the pandemic. We also realize that those gaps that we did assign that we could find in the dashboard came from maybe two different places, one, perhaps large programmatic issues, things that we need to change like class sizes, we know that as class sizes decrease, equity gaps can go down. And so we talked about things like that, we talked about prerequisite issues, how in my class, I may create an equity gap that persists into the next class up or several classes up if we have a linear course design. And so that may be something we can change. But we also saw that there were ways to mitigate these equity gaps through individual connections with students one on one connections, a faculty member with one student, if we can keep the one student engaged and enrolled, especially during this pandemic time when things are so much harder for all of us, that perhaps we can slowly but surely start to change the effect the gap is having on our university. And we talked about ways to do that through surveys, through polls, through personal check ins when students are missing assignments, all sorts of different ways that perhaps we can make a difference in the in the in the education of one student at a time, when we couple that with drilling down through the data with the data dashboard here on campus, as well as the CSU system Student Success dashboard, we found that that actually helped us to get a small handle on what we can do in our classrooms on a day to day basis.

10:21

Jamie, if I may, I would like to jump in because what Erik said in terms of looking at data without really having a context or looking at numbers without really understanding what these numbers mean, this is the type of work that the Middle Leadership Academy cohort of this year try to address. So we attended a number of meetings. But the key goal for the MLA group was to create resources and work closely with FLC precisely to help faculty understand the context of these data, collecting student narratives that would provide qualitative data and information that could be paired with the more you know, dry data. So we're putting together a series of resources that will be shared with campus and we hope to have a fall showcase where some of the faculty from the FLC and the MLA group can share these work and these resources with the rest of campus.

11:31

Another FLC that I believe aligns quite nicely with our equity, diversity and inclusion priority focused on the theory and practice of teaching first year students. This FLC was led by Dr. Ellie Ertle, Interim Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education. Ellie, can you tell us a little more about the goal of this FLC and what you in faculty learn through this collaboration.

11:53

Alright, thanks, Jamie. Thanks for having me. So we started out this FLC with a quote and from Erickson, Peters, and Straumur, who said, if they feel welcomed, challenged and supported first year, students flourish, they persist in their studies, they grow as human beings, and eventually they become

the sort of informed and inquiring citizens so essential for our times. And I wanted to repeat that today, because I think that really helped us to set the groundwork for what it was that we were trying to do together in the FLC. And to really frame our experience around students what we wanted for students and how we wanted to interact with them as we were in our in our learning spaces. So the FLC invited participants to think about teaching and learning but specifically with a focus on first year students, and to support teaching across the disciplines while thinking about how best to support first year students as novice learners. And so each of our sessions and discussions were around various topics related to that general goal, and grounded in access to education and equity for learners. So that's really that's kind of where we started from, for this particular FLC. We began the FLC with students. So our first session was a panel of students all first year students who talked to us about their experiences in the first year, their obstacles, their successes, and the kinds of things that they wanted us to know, as faculty about what it meant, or what it felt like to be a first year student. So that was really exciting. I think it was actually probably the most beloved session of the entire year, I probably could have just we could have done that every single time and everyone would have been happy. But we move from there to talk about a variety of topics like emerging adulthood student development and learning theory, how to support student readers, how to make sure that we are engaging our students. And we learned from faculty across campus and then we learn from each other. So we spent a lot of time sharing with each other the different things that we were trying out in our classes, what was working, what wasn't working, brainstorming with each other. And ultimately, I think we just created a great community of practice. I'm excited by the fact that at the end, the folks in the in the FLC, we're saying how can we continue this conversation? What can we do and the director of the First Year Experience Program, Dr. Kendall Leon was actually in the FLC and offer to continue those conversations a lot. We're in the first year experience in through the First Year Experience Program and then in upcoming years, so I'm excited that we found ourselves we really created a network and found ourselves as kind of a collaborative team.

14:38

Our next FLC focusing on digital pedagogy seems rather relevant and timely considering the rapid shift to distance learning we experienced this past year. This FLC is led by Dr. Kim Jaxon, a professor of English in the Department of English. Kim, I am geeking out with anticipation please tell us about the goal this FLC and what you and faculty through collaboration and creation, and thank you in advance for sharing your website, which we will link on our podcast website for everybody to see.

15:09

Thanks so much, Jamie. And it's already been so awesome to hear from Erik and Ellie, who I know had amazing FLCs. Um, we set up this one in the fall and the spring when Chiara and I were talking to kind of actually move away from some of the tool focused work that was going on, on around digital pedagogy, even though there was a huge need, you know, for digital tools. As we all moved online, we wanted to take a step back and thinking about not necessarily teaching online, but teaching humans that that's what we're still doing is teaching humans. And we spent a lot of time in the beginning thinking about how to build community and thinking about participation, especially thinking about participation beyond talk, because in some ways, Zoom actually makes it harder to talk over the top of each other. So we wanted to spend some time we traced our classes, noticing other ways that students participated, maybe through writing, or through a curated google doc or a set of Google Slides, some

sort of deliverables, maybe annotating in something like perusal or just on a Google Doc of a reading. So we spend some time thinking about how are students participating in our classes right now? And how might we swap up those structure structures. So really carefully noticing our class, because I direct the Northern California writing project, I come from a belief that the best teachers for teachers are other teachers. And so we really set this up to learn from each other. And one of the ways that we did that was we had smaller groups we called coaching sessions. So a group of three to five faculty meeting together. And we used kind of loosely, this critical friends protocol, where you present a problem of practice, something that's really bothering you, or you're having a hard time with an assignment, an activity, something, the tone of your syllabus, and then after you present, that you listen, while the other people there, talk through it. So you can't get all defensive. Either. You have to listen while these other people talk through what's going on what they might do, if that was their class, and they were having that issue. And then you reflect on that. What happens when we do that is that really cool things also emerge, it's not ever just a problem, you also hear this cool stuff that other faculty are doing. And so we take that opportunity then to sometimes ask those faculty to share that back with the whole group. So some of my there's where we might have a tool show up, like Allison from math might share something really cool of how she's using Pear Deck. And so the tools kind of emerge in the in the coaching sessions and the conversations that we're having. And yeah, I would invite people, that website is open, it will be up. And there's tons of suggested readings and ways you could walk through thinking about your class questions you could ask about your class on on that site. And yeah, I've learned a ton from all my colleagues in those FLCs.

18:15

Interested in leadership? There's an FLC for that! In fact, it's led by Dr. Kevin Patton, Chair of Kinesiology and Dr. Holly Nevarez, Executive Chair of Public Health and Health Services Administration. Kevin, Holly, can you tell us a little bit more about the goal of this FLC its participants and what you in faculty learned through this collaboration.

18:35

Jamie, thank you for this opportunity. We're really excited to share about the chair learning community. Some of our overall arching goals of this community was really to support future chairs, in alignment with Chico state's commitment to a couple of things shared governance, transparency, and then an inclusive workspace. And so really, what Holly and I tried to do with this was to create an opportunity for current and future chairs to be supported. And one thing that research tells us is that less than 3% of department chairs actually get some form of training, to do the skills that they are asked to perform in their position. So our goal here was to create this inclusive group where future leaders could learn from and with each other. And we tackled that in this chair learning community.

19:32

We did and this year our participants, we have 13 people in our FLC. And I would say about half of those are people who are new in their chair role. So they were first year chairs. We had one second year chair, but then we had the other half of the participants were people who are either stepping into the role next academic year or would like to step into the role into the future. What was great about our group this year is that we were from all different colleges across campus and all different departments. And so we really could learn from each other. Because the colleges, the chair role in different colleges

look a little bit different. And so that's a unique opportunity. But also we built a community together. And so going forward, we now have this group of 13. People who know each other from this experience, and hopefully can reach out to each other in the future and ask questions. The chair job is humongous. And we could not cover all the things that chairs me to know. But we were able to cover what we thought were the biggest priorities, which would be things like writing RTP reports, and reviewing staff, making the schedule, hiring new faculty, supporting new faculty, but also supporting faculty throughout their time at Chico State. This is my second year leading this FLC through FDEV, and it's been great both years. But what I think about is the impact of that. So like if we can have our chairs be more comfortable in their job and give them skills in their job, then that's going to impact a department. And then that's going to trickle down to the students. And so just think about the impact that we can have if we keep helping to develop these leaders.

21:36

Jamie, I'd like to just add that if any of your listeners are interested in future leadership roles, whether that be as a department chair and associate chair or some other leadership opportunity, this could be a great, safe by challenging learning space for you. And so we would just encourage you to join a future version of this FLC.

21:59

So Chiara, I have to throw it to you. Now I'm super excited to hear all these opportunities that I could potentially engage in. I know that many of these opportunities were funded by GI2025. But what opportunities are going to be available for me in the future? Hopefully, I'll be able to engage in all of this fun.

22:21

It's hard to give a precise answer because on the one hand, we don't have a clear budget allocation yet. And technically, there's no GI2025 students access funds. Now, the idea is to discuss with the board some major topics that correspond to faculty needs, I feel that work on equity is a constant need and actually a priority that we have to focus on. So I am not sure if there will be exactly a closing the equity gap I foresee, I sure hope that there will be something very close to it. I think that we need to keep on serving first year students, we need to address different pedagogies including digital hybrid, etc. So there will always be programs that help instructors teach better and promote better learning.

23:25

And there you have it, folks. Today we discussed the many ways our campus engaged in learning and collaboration to support student success. For more information, including teaching guides and resources, check out the FLC and FDEV podcast web pages located on the FDEV website. I'd like to thank Drs. Ferrari, Wasinger, Jaxson, Ertle, Nevarez, and Patton for contributing to this episode. I'd also like to extend a special thank you to Quinn Winchell for our podcast music and to the vocal stylings of Dr. Browning Neddeau for the land acknowledgement.

23:58

Join us for our next season in the fall 2021 semester. Until then, we got this Wildcats