

**Faculty Development and Innovation Center
Active Learning Faculty Learning Community**

The FDIC has established an annual cohort of faculty members to collaborate in a faculty learning community. The purpose of this community is to imagine, develop, and share techniques for active learning within the Center for Student Innovation (CSI) classroom as well as other spaces on campus.

The objectives of this Faculty Learning Community (FLC) are to:

- Identify active learning methods and learning spaces for teaching and learning at EIU.
- Develop a set of active learning techniques to share through the FDIC.
- Support faculty interested in active, creative, and innovative teaching and learning.
- Integrate teaching and learning styles that promote principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Produce a cohort of active learning leaders to train, support, and empower other EIU faculty interested in active learning.

Ideal participants will have experience with active learning techniques, have an interest in learning from other faculty from across EIU, and are willing to teach and demonstrate their own techniques to other faculty colleagues. More so, participants will have a current or future class lesson or activity that could be enhanced by utilizing an active learning space, such as the CSI, and be willing to share and develop that activity in collaboration with other interested participants.

Background:

A Faculty Learning Communityⁱ (FLC) is a peer-led group of faculty members (6-12 in number) who engage in active, collaborative programming, with a curriculum structured to provide encouragement, support, and reflection on teaching and learning.

What is active learning?

Active learning strategies are instructional activities involving learners in doing things and thinking about what they are doing.ⁱⁱ These require learners to engage in meaningful activities and think deeply about the concepts they are learning. When people engage in active learning, they are more likely to retain what they have learned.

What are active learning spaces?

Active learning spaces offer extensive pedagogical opportunities to meet the needs of contemporary learners through active learning and inspire them to develop relevant skills. Common featuresⁱⁱⁱ of successful active learning spaces include:

- putting learners at the center;
- using space in the facilitation of impactful pedagogy;
- utilizing technology to enhance – not lead – learning;
- opportunities for education and training of faculty and instructors;
- and fostering cross-discipline collaboration

Vision:

The vision for this FLC is to model faculty peer teaching and learning. To do so, the commitment by participants would be one day per month beginning in early October 2025, then meet monthly for the remainder of the calendar year (November & December) and **bi-monthly** in the Spring 2026 semester. The time and day are up to the group membership, agreeable to those who decide to participate; FLC meetings will be held in the CSI active learning space.

Each participant will receive a copy of "[The New College Classroom](#)" by Davidson and Katopodis which will be read throughout the year. Director of Faculty Development and Innovation Center, Dr. Michael Gillespie, will attend the first meeting to introduce the project, orient the group, and establish the parameters, as well as facilitate the group throughout the year. Members will also get to work with FDIC Instructional Designer, Kim Ervin.

Milton Cox^{iv} established ten qualities necessary for community in FLCs, which includes safety and trust, openness, respect, responsiveness, collaboration, relevance, challenge, enjoyment, esprit de corps, and empowerment (a description of these ten qualities are listed in Appendix A). These are the same qualities that should steer this FDIC Faculty Learning Community. A copy of the Cox's full article is available [here](#).

The FDIC is continually building a [Zotero](#) database of recent articles on [active learning](#) and [faculty learning communities](#) to help invigorate the work of this group. Further, you will be invited to add to these lists through the work of this group.

Members will decide the details of each session (session leader, topic, focused reading) and the outcomes of each session (technique, practice, document). As a learning community, the faculty participants are both teachers and learners, and ultimately responsible for the learning content in the community.

If you accept this invitation, you will be accepting:

- exclusive participation in this FLC;
- working with a diverse groups of faculty colleagues across campus;
- the ability to share experiences and learn from peers;
- to enhance your own teaching and learning;
- submitting a reflective essay on active learning spaces to be shared with faculty across our campus community;
- to potentially creating a workshop on your own active learning activity developed or enhanced as an outcome of working with this FLC;
- to earn an FDIC Certificate of Participation;
- and to receive a letter of support which can be used as evidence in retention and promotion materials.

Please contact Andrew Kerins, Director of the FDIC with questions at ajkerins@eiu.edu or 217.581.7056

Appendix A: Qualities Necessary for Community in FLCs^v

- **Safety and trust.** In order for participants to connect with one another, they must have a sense of safety and trust. This is especially true when participants reveal weaknesses in their teaching or ignorance of teaching processes or literature.
- **Openness.** In an atmosphere of openness, participants can feel free to share their thoughts and feelings without fear of retribution.
- **Respect.** In order to coalesce as a learning community, members need to feel that they are valued and respected as people. It is important for the university to acknowledge their participation by financially supporting community projects and participation at FLC topic-related conferences.
- **Responsiveness.** Members must respond respectfully to one another, and the facilitator(s) must respond quickly to the participants. The facilitator should welcome the expression of concerns and preferences and, when appropriate, share these with individuals and the entire FLC.
- **Collaboration.** The importance of collaboration in consultation and group discussion on individual members' projects and on achieving community learning outcomes hinges on group members' ability with and respond to one another. In addition, to individual projects, joint projects and presentations should be welcomed.
- **Relevance.** Learning outcomes are enhanced by relating the subject matter of the FLC to the participants' teaching, courses, scholarship, professional interests, and life experiences. All participants should be encouraged to seek out and share teaching and other real-life examples to illustrate these outcomes.
- **Challenge.** Expectations for the quality of FLC outcomes should be high, engendering a sense of progress, scholarship value, and accomplishment. Sessions should include, for example, some in which individuals share syllabi and report on their individual projects.
- **Enjoyment.** Activities must include social opportunities to lighten up and bond and should take place in invigorating environments. For example, a retreat can take place off-campus at a nearby country inn, state park, historic site, or the like.
- **Esprit de corps.** Sharing individual and community outcomes with colleagues in the academy should generate pride and loyalty. For example, when the community makes a campus presentation, participants strive to provide an excellent session.
- **Empowerment.** A sense of empowerment is both a crucial element and a desired outcome of participation in an FLC. In the construction of a transformative learning environment, the participants gain a new view of themselves and a new sense of confidence in their abilities. Faculty members leave their year of participation with better courses and a clearer understanding of themselves and their students. Key outcomes include scholarly teaching and contributions to the scholarship of teaching.

ⁱ "Introduction to Faculty Learning Communities." Milton D. Cox (2004), pp. 5-23 in *Building Faculty Learning Communities, New Directions for Teaching and Learning, Number 97*, M.D. Cox, and L. Richlin, eds.

ⁱⁱ *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom*. Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison (1991). ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, No. 1

ⁱⁱⁱ "Active Learning Spaces in the United States." Stan Aalderink (2019), *Educause Review*. Available: <https://er.educause.edu/blogs/2019/10/active-learning-spaces-lessons-learned-in-the-united-states>

^{iv} "Introduction to Faculty Learning Communities." Milton D. Cox (2004), pp. 5-23 in *Building Faculty Learning Communities, New Directions for Teaching and Learning, Number 97*, M.D. Cox, and L. Richlin, eds.

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