

Abstract

The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL) at the School of Information Studies (iSchool) at Syracuse University is devoted to the professional and personal growth of all iSchool faculty and has, as a central tenet of its mission, the goal of fostering a dynamic and committed teaching and learning community from across distances and disciplines. The FCTL provides iSchool faculty members with the needed resources and support to excel in their teaching, so that iSchool students develop the knowledge, competencies, and attitudes to thrive in a diverse and rapidly changing environment.

Submission

Our Mission and Scope

Welcome to the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL)!

Our Mission is to serve the entire iSchool community, which includes tenured and tenure track faculty, professors of practice, adjuncts, instructors, PhD candidates, and teaching assistants in meeting their instructional goals. Our mission also focuses on students, their engagement in their courses and especially the support they receive regarding Blackboard.

We aim to promote the enhancement of teaching and learning environments across different teaching modalities, improve student learning outcomes by providing guidance and support toward the understanding and implementation of best practices, and provide support in the creation and implementation of assessment plans for programs and classrooms. The focus of our efforts will result in greater student interaction in our courses, greater student mastery of course content, greater operational efficiency, and greater faculty development.

The FCTL is a place for the iSchool instructional community to come together and share knowledge, learn from one another, and find resources and support to help grow and develop as educators. Our goal is to foster teaching and learning excellence at the iSchool. The FCTL supports the iSchool instructional community by offering a variety of teaching and learning opportunities such as workshops, seminars, individual consultations, and peer reviews, as well as the many resources available on our website. These resources cover several areas including, but not limited to: course design, teaching with technology, best practices for teaching and learning, and assessment of learning outcomes. Our work is empirically driven and inspired by research on teaching and learning. We work to align teaching theory with the practice of teaching across modalities: large lectures, small seminars, labs, blended, online, and face-to-face.

The School of Information Studies has a long and proud reputation for its innovative thinking and willingness to try new things. It is in this spirit that the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning provides faculty, staff and students with a one-stop shop for all things related to teaching and learning, including Learning Management System support.

Today's high-paced, high-tech society has created students (both full-time and part-time) who are increasingly demanding access to more flexible and more technology-driven educational opportunities. This demand for flexibility has led to rapid expansion in the field of online and web-enhanced teaching and learning.

There are many higher education institutions where instructors create their own course materials with little instructional design support. Faculty are experts in their discipline, having studied and researched extensively; however, they cannot be expected to become instructional design experts without providing sufficient time and services for course development. Designing a course requires a systemic process that dissects the course learning objectives, presents content, and builds in interactivity and assessment. This is where a centralized Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning can help.

Courses that are designed under the FCTL model reflect a more innovative and creative way for instructors to engage students with their content, while the instructional design team ensures that each course is accurate, error-free, tested for usability, and accessible. FCTL also incorporates an appropriate balance of content mastery activities that include: interactive activities to foster peer engagement, critical thinking assignments, and high-level synthesis projects.

The FCTL promotes forward thinking in terms of designing and delivering all types of courses and offers a comfortable and safe environment where instructors, staff and students can come to receive knowledge, help, and support.

Best Practices

The FCTL will promote best practices at the iSchool by providing the following:

- Provide faculty support in a rapidly evolving profession and teaching/ learning environment. The FCTL fosters a safe space for honest, productive dialogue informed by scholarship and experience from all disciplines, ranks, and full-time and part-time status.
- Promote communication and collaboration across disciplines. The FCTL serves as a hub that fosters a dynamic and committed community across disciplines.
- Create an ongoing, coherent discussion of pedagogical practices in and out of the classroom. The FCTL coordinates faculty development activities, resources, and information.
- Respond to new ideas and trends in teaching and learning. With faculty bringing in ideas from their outside contacts and the center monitoring trends in higher education, the

FCTL ensures that the iSchool as a whole remains up to date in current pedagogical thinking.

OUTCOMES

Four primary themes have emerged on the outcomes from a successful FCTL:

1. The center is recognized by iSchool faculty as an essential and central part of:
 - Academic life at the iSchool
 - The support system for faculty's professional development
 - The resources for meeting faculty needs
2. Faculty feel a stronger sense of community, as evidenced by:
 - Widespread involvement of faculty from the entire iSchool community in FCTL programming
 - A greater sense of connection to the iSchool community among adjunct faculty
 - Greater communication and collaboration across disciplines and ranks
 - Events and programs of varied topic, scope, size, and method
3. The FCTL have changed faculty practice as evidenced by:
 - Faculty reporting a greater understanding of their own practices
 - Faculty being able to cite specific changes and improvements in their pedagogy as a result of the efforts of the FCTL
4. The FCTL is an integral contributor to the iSchool's strategic plan as evidenced by:
 - Specific metrics that gauge the iSchool's achievement of its goal to foster and sustain rigorous academic programs

FCTL OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning continuously seeks to improve its services and value to the iSchool teaching community. Program evaluation criteria include:

1. Participation rates, e.g. number of faculty participating in FCTL events and programs over the course of a year;
2. Distribution of faculty participants by department, rank, sub-discipline, experience level at the iSchool, full-time/part-time status, and faculty demographics;
3. Participant evaluation of FCTL activities immediately after implementation, as well as pre- and post-participation surveys on knowledge and understanding of specific topics;
4. Faculty assessment of the impact of FCTL on long-term changes in their teaching practices

Through these identified areas of development and practice, the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning has become an integral, supportive, communicative department at the iSchool. Faculty actively seek our support and guidance; we are a sought after resource for observation and evaluation; we continually and regularly update faculty on the pedagogy and technology best practices; and we are involved in all faculty-led committees to demonstrate our commitment to the faculty at the iSchool.

FCTL Staff Members

Peggy M. Takach

Director of the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, pmtakach@syr.edu

Peggy oversees instructional development opportunities for faculty and the mission of the FCTL to promote improved student learning. She develops and implements a program that includes scholarship of teaching and learning, learning outcomes assessment in the classroom and program level and expanding the quality of faculty development opportunities. Peggy is a proud iSchool alum.

Jeffrey L. Fouts

Director of Instructional Technology, jlfouts@syr.edu

Jeff oversees and manages the research and implementation of innovative new tools and practices to fit curriculum requirements, consults with faculty in the identification of the best instructional tool(s) for the delivery of learning content, supporting faculty in the design of the learning management system. He reviews and evaluates system design and performance as it affects course delivery. Jeff is a proud iSchool alum.

We work closely together to offer effective support through a variety of instructional strategies, technologies and approaches for design elements across multiple modes including synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid and massive online open curriculum.