

Innovation Award

Featured Faculty Program at College of Lake County, IL

Page Wolf Accepting

The College of Lake County's Faculty Development Advisory Committee was looking for a way to increase participation in their awards program. After a number of years, nominations and participation in their existing program had greatly dwindled. Since they wanted to still effectively promote and share good teaching, they needed to rethink approaches that might best motivate faculty to share what they do. They knew that faculty members were still doing creative things in the classroom, yet no one seemed to want to write about them. Their solution was to redirect the focus from "innovation" which was intimidating to some, to a discussion on common teaching issues and share comments on these topics using a blog.

Topics were suggested and agreed upon by members of the Faculty Development Advisory Committee. Many of these topics related to other initiatives at the college. Topics covered thus far in the program include:

- Advice for new faculty members
- Humor in the classroom
- Passion for teaching
- Encouraging students to get to know each other
- Cheating and plagiarism
- Working with first year students
- Working with "challenging" students
- Active learning
- Lecture techniques

The mechanics of the *Featured Faculty* Program are simple. The 219 full-time and over 700 part-time faculty members at College of Lake County are e-mailed a topic and asked to submit 300-500 word responses sharing their perspectives. All submissions are then entered onto a Featured Faculty Blog and everyone who submits a response receives a small token of appreciation. One winner is chosen at random, their picture and submission entry are posted on the front page of the Professional Development Center website and they received a choice of \$25 gift certificate for merchandise from various campus and community sources.

The *Featured Faculty* program was changed from the earlier recognition program in the following ways:

- A concentration on diverse teaching approaches rather than strictly "innovation"
- A shorter application process (previously a nomination by self, dean or colleague, then a one-page description of teaching; now a 300-500 word description)
- Variety of monthly award categories (instead of 3 repetitive broad categories)
- Monetary incentive (instead of name-only incentive)
- Use of electronic submission forms
- Use of Internet to share submissions

The College of Lake County now has an effective means for faculty to be recognized for their instruction and to share information with their peers. Participation from faculty continues to grow and represents a varied pool. They have had participation from both full- and part-time faculty members representing diverse academic disciplines and have had a different pool of faculty members responding to each month's topic. Many faculty members have verbally expressed how much they look forward to reading the submissions and how much they have learned from each other.

These are some of the benefits of the Featured Faculty program:

- Faculty and staff at the college learn more about what their peers are doing
- It promotes the use of new technologies and models how blogs can be used
- Submissions can be reviewed, commented on, and referred to at any time
- New faculty are referred to the Featured Faculty Blog to see last spring's responses to "Advice to New Faculty Members."
- It encourage faculty to reflect upon their own teaching
- It provides concrete ideas of what goes on in the classroom at our college which allows the faculty developer, to be able to form connections with faculty and gain greater insight as to who is doing what on campus
- It provides outreach to adjunct faculty members

Overall, the main goal this program achieves is the sharing of information among faculty colleagues. As the program continues to grow and more people respond to the questions, the blog becomes an increasingly valuable resource. College of Lake County has found an inexpensive yet fun way to recognize good classroom instruction and promote professional development.