Chapter 81

Case Study on Coaching Community College Faculty Member Experiences Transitioning to Online Education During COVID–19

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ABSTRACT

This embedded case study focused on the experiences of coaches and community college faculty who participated in the coaching portion of an emergency remote transition project. The transition project was holistically designed to support community college faculty who had prepped for face-to-face courses and were shifting to remote teaching in a short period of time. Coaching services were one element of the project that also offered webinars, creation of short tutorial videos, and other support services. Qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed. Coaching was successful in helping community college faculty transition from teaching in-person courses to fully online courses quickly. Community college faculty showed determination, resilience, and remained dedicated to their students' successful completion of the semester despite the worldwide pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

In Spring 2020, the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research (Belk Center) at North Carolina State University (NC State) launched a multi-faceted project to support North Carolina community college leaders and educators facing quick transitions to online education due to COVID-19. Support services offered directly to community college instructors included individual and group coaching, video tutorials, and large attendance webinars. The project supported North Carolina community college educators to receive these services at no cost to the individual faculty, department, or community college.

Context

North Carolina has 58 community colleges serving approximately 735,000 (NCCCS, 2015) students across the state. The number and locations of the 58 community colleges provide that all residents of North Carolina can access a community college campus within a 30-minute drive. Virtual enrollment opportunities have connected students with access to 248 curriculum programs and 45 continuing education courses.

In March 2020, a majority of the North Carolina community college programs were required to move to remote teaching and learning with only days of advanced warning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the forced quick transition to remote teaching, a project developed within a 24-hour timeframe to serve community college educators as they adapted to teach at a distance. Within the first week of delivering free webinars to community college educators, the project received additional requests for coaching services, the creation of instructional videos, and team meetings.

Process

Support services were offered remotely through virtual conferencing. North Carolina community college leaders were provided a link to share with their faculty and staff to request support from the Belk Center coaching program. This direct communication between community college faculty in need of support and the Belk Center project team allowed for efficient and one-on-one support to the faculty. To request support services, faculty were asked to complete a short online form that included their contact information, the name of the community college, subject area, the learning management system (LMS) their college uses, the nature of the help they were seeking, and whether they would prefer to receive individual coaching, group coaching, or short video tutorials they could watch at their convenience. The project did not report service requests back to community colleges, an intentional choice designed to alleviate any fear that asking for help could impact the roles served by the educators.

A Belk Center staff member assisting with the project processed the needs requests submitted through the online form. The staff member directed the request first based on the type of support requested (i.e., individual coaching, group coaching, or short video). Group coaching sessions and short video requests were primarily handled by the NC State University Belk Center faculty scholars leading the project. To support the project and allow for more timely responses, additional coaches were hired from outside the NC State Belk Center staff to serve individual coaching session needs. Coaches for the project were selected based on academic content area and online teaching expertise. Coaches delivering individual coaching sessions were contract employees of the Belk Center, contracted specifically for this project

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