Faculty Program for Active-Learning in STEM (PALS)

Description:

In this NSF-supported program, faculty will participate in a year-long program to incorporate active learning into their classes. A 10-12 member cohort will be formed from faculty in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). The 2014 cohort will be college-wide and interdisciplinary (but all within the STEM fields). Participants will make a monthly commitment to:

i. developing or reforming an activity to be used in their classroom,
ii. presenting the activity to the cohort,
iii. discussing other participants' activities, and
iv. debriefing after the activity has been implemented.

All of these activities will be on the virtual discussion board (using Blackboard). Faculty mentors will monitor and advise via the discussion board, possibly with classroom visits. Participants are encouraged to visit each other's classrooms as well. Faculty mentors will include past participants of PALS.

Participants will meet during the Spring Professional days (January) for a 2-hour meet-and-greet and seminar on some active learning strategies. For the first 4 weeks, participants will be assigned weekly readings and will be asked to contribute to discussions on a virtual discussion board (using Blackboard). Then, the cohort will work on activity development and implementation, with discussions on Blackboard for the remainder of the Spring semester.

After the summer break, participants will meet for a seminar during the Fall Professional days (August). The Fall semester will see participants developing further activities to be used in their classroom. Participants can design their own goals; perhaps a participant wishes to develop activities that are more involved (entire class or multi-class periods), or a participant may wish to develop activities for a new course.

In addition to online discussions, several brown-bag discussions will be organized on each campus for each semester to further foster a sense of community, to continue activity-related discussions, and to brainstorm strategies for classroom management.

Goals for Participants:

After the program, participants should have a good grasp of goals and challenges of different kinds of active-learning lessons, and have a portfolio of at 6-8 activities they have developed and tested. The cohort will bring a sense of community support for active-learning in STEM disciplines.

Program Support:

This program is supported by the *Center for Teaching and Learning* (CTL) and *Distance Education and Learning Technologies* (DELT). PALS is a STEP-grant funded by NSF over 5-years (2012-2017). Participants who complete the program will receive Professional Development credit through CTL. Program graduates may have the opportunity to act as a faculty mentor through the program in subsequent years. The program will be open to part-time faculty during the 2015 calendar year.

Timeline:

6-11 November 2013	Applications open to STEM full-time faculty
6 December 2013	Applications due
16 December 2013	PALS cohort for 2014 announced
January 2014	Program begins: Seminar for cohort during Professional Week
January-February 2014	Readings and discussion through Blackboard
February-May 2014	Classroom activity development, implementation, and report/discussion
August 2014	Seminar for cohort during Professional Week
August-December 2014	Classroom activity development, implementation, and report/discussion
December 2014	Program ends