3 ways to get faculty more engaged in learning innovations

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Colleges and universities face increasing pressure to innovate, but a bold strategic initiative requires buy-in from a range of stakeholders. For many campus innovation leaders—and instructional designers, in particular—forming meaningful partnerships with campus stakeholders and raising awareness about the multitude of services offered are the hardest parts of the process, writes David Raths for Campus Technology.

That's in part because faculty don't have a clear idea of what instructional designers do, suggests Raths.

For instance, many faculty members see instructional designers as IT support staff, he writes. That's why "[w]e call ourselves learning designers here," says Erin DeSilva, the Assistant Director of Learning Design and Technology at Dartmouth College. "We really wanted to indicate that the student was the center of our focus and not the material development. We have some learning experience design training, but we also have training in motivational interviewing, which is a therapy technique and which is probably used in our work as much as the design stuff."

Here are three more ways to engage faculty in learning innovation, from DeSilva and two other instructional designers:

1: Make connections

Sara Davis shares that when she first arrived at Pennsylvania State University to work as the Instructional Designer in the Teaching and Learning with Technology Department, she was tasked with helping faculty migrate to a new learning
management system. "Because we were migrating to a new platform, it opened up the
door to have conversations about the way the course was designed—because we had
to restructure them anyway," she says.

Davis then realized that, to best manage the project, she needed to connect with
people she could learn from both within and outside of her department, including
project managers in IT, OER experts, and researchers. "There is so much technology
in use now that it is impossible to be an expert on all of it, so you need to find people
who are experts and build a network," she says.

2: Meet faculty where they are

Todd Conaway, an Instructional Designer in the Office of Digital Learning &
Innovation at the University of Washington Bothell, suggests that instructional
designers haven't traditionally done a good job of approaching faculty with learning
innovation ideas.

Conaway suggests that instructional designers meet faculty members where they are
and invest time in forming relationships. For instance, when faculty members express
interest in a topic, they often say things like, "When are you going to have a training
session on that?" And Conaway says he always responds with, "Right this second!
Come sit with me and we will discover all kinds of things."

"I want to work with faculty individually and see them progress as educators, from
wherever they are today to wherever we can get them to tomorrow," says Conaway of
his approach.

Plus, as instructional designers are increasingly focused on humanizing course
materials, it’s more important than ever to form relationships with and listen to
faculty, adds Davis. "I always start with asking faculty what they want their students
to get out of their course experience, and we talk through that before we start any
design work," she says. "There is a saying that people ignore design that ignores
people. You can set something up with the best of intentions, but if you are not
listening to your users, it might not be used in the way it was intended to be used."

3: Be open and flexible

DeSilva suggests that instructional designers should remain open to new opportunities
to present the work of their department and be flexible in their engagement efforts.
She explains that one of her most successful programs emerged from a course
redesign initiative, but later transformed into a program that "wasn't in our wheelhouse."

"Running it out of our department has been an interesting adventure," says DeSilva. "We have gotten more faculty development and meaningful course redesign and excellent relationship building through this program than through anything else we have done. It was a completely different thing to take on" (Raths, Campus Technology, 4/3).

https://www.eab.com/daily-briefing/2019/04/15/3-ways-to-get-faculty-more-engaged-in-learning-innovations?utm_source=eabdb&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=eabdb&mkt_tok=eyJpIjoiTnpKak1UaGxPRGRsWWpkaClInQjOiJxbUtmY0RNaDRyNVl4Q3dGc1E4djBicEdGOVBHU0RkSWRoV1wwWmNcL3dSYWxPU2lIz3dYaUdsZIhHNDhWTDbWkhHRm0xYTJhYkVIblB6bjRvRXN4alwveWIHbzZRQ2NObm5nbjJTeXNXelVkJMVlyNXlyUEpaU2Qyc3dHWJhHRyJ9