

# ***Faculty Development Opportunities through CTE and Teaching Circles***

**Wednesday, September 5, 2018: 3:30-5:00 p.m., Allegheny Room (HUB)**

## **What is Reflective Practice?**

It is a campus-wide effort sponsored by the IUP Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) to promote more effective teaching through the use of workshops, monthly meetings, and Teaching Circles. This program, called the Reflective Practice (RP) Project, has been around since 1993.

Many of us have few opportunities to talk about teaching, and if they happen, we will often focus on our frustrations rather than our successes. Teaching Circles are our way of encouraging constructive conversations in order to learn from each other by sharing successful teaching strategies.

## **The Reflective Practice Project Co-Directors:**

<i>Stephanie Taylor-Davis, CTE Director</i> <i>Saturday Workshops</i> <a href="mailto:stdavis@iup.edu">stdavis@iup.edu</a>	
<i>Carrie Bishop</i> <i>Online Teaching</i> <a href="mailto:cbishop@iup.edu">cbishop@iup.edu</a>	<i>Erin Conlin</i> <i>Monthly Large Group Meetings</i> <a href="mailto:Erin.Conlin@iup.edu">Erin.Conlin@iup.edu</a>
<i>John Lewis</i> <i>Advising and Student Success</i> <a href="mailto:J.A.Lewis@iup.edu">J.A.Lewis@iup.edu</a>	<i>Christoph Maier</i> <i>RP Portfolio and Assessment</i> <a href="mailto:Christoph.Maier@iup.edu">Christoph.Maier@iup.edu</a>
<i>Theresa McDevitt</i> <i>Scholarship of Teaching and Learning</i> <a href="mailto:McDevitt@iup.edu">McDevitt@iup.edu</a>	<i>Heide Witthöft</i> <i>Cross-Disciplinary and Department Teaching Circles</i> <a href="mailto:heide@iup.edu">heide@iup.edu</a>

## **Establishing a Teaching Circle**

Information is available on the CTE webpage: <https://www.iup.edu/teachingexcellence/reflective-practice/teaching-circles/procedure-to-establish-teaching-circles/>

1. If you would like to form a new Teaching Circle or if your already existing Teaching Circle would like to continue during the 2018-2019 academic year, please send your name and the name your Teaching Circle via e-mail to Heide Witthöft ([heide@iup.edu](mailto:heide@iup.edu)).
2. The facilitator(s) will then be sent an e-mail message with a link to a short electronic form to register the Teaching Circle.
3. Once facilitators have registered their Teaching Circle, they will be sent a second unique link with an electronic membership registration form which they will forward to those colleagues who have expressed an interest in joining their Teaching Circle. Once they have completed the electronic form, they are officially registered as members. Facilitators will get notified of each member registration.
4. A list of Teaching Circles will be put on the CTE website. It will be updated periodically. Colleagues interested in joining a Teaching Circle need to contact the facilitator who will then send them the Teaching Circle member registration link. [*Facilitators may limit membership!*]

## **Mini-Grants**

Each year, the Reflective Practice Project dedicates a portion of the budget received from the Provost's Office to fund Mini-Grants. Their purpose is to support Teaching Circles that are working on clear, well-defined outcomes which will enhance the teaching skills of all members and/or add to the Teaching Circle's knowledge of the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Any Teaching Circle can apply for up to \$500 to help sustain its productive activity and goals for the semester or year. Proposals are evaluated for their impact on student and/or faculty learning, feasibility, and clarity. Mini-Grant Guidelines are available at: <https://www.iup.edu/teachingexcellence/awards-and-grants/teaching-circle-mini-grants/guidelines-for-cross-disciplinary-and-departmental-teaching-circle-mini-grants/>

**Submission deadline: 4:30 p.m., October 5, 2018**

## **Teaching Circles: Low-Cost, High-Impact Faculty Development**

**Barbara A. Mezeske**

Two years ago, a midcareer colleague in the mathematics department sent around an e-mail to all faculty at our college, inviting us to read a book with her. And as simply as that, a teaching circle was formed. A teaching circle, the term we use at my institution, is simply a group of faculty interested in discussing teaching at regular intervals, ideally over food. As my colleague said, laughing, at our first meeting, “I need a support group, and everyone needs lunch!”

That first year, we chose to read Maryellen Weimer’s *Learner-Centered Teaching*, a chapter at a time. We met every three or four weeks in a private room attached to the student cafeteria, where we picked up our lunches by going through the line. Our provost, perhaps impressed by our initiative, agreed to foot the bill for our lunches, a modest expenditure from his point of view.

<sup>1</sup>As many as nine people participated, though the core group consisted of five faculty representing sociology, nursing, chemistry, English, and math. As we discussed each month’s assigned reading, we shared stories and strategies. One person redesigned her entire approach to assessing student learning; our math leader incorporated lots of writing activities into her upper-level course. As we came to know each other better, someone suggested that we observe one another’s classes, which several of us did. In the spring, six of us arranged to attend the first Teaching Professor Conference in Philadelphia.

The group reformed at the beginning of the next school year and this time read two books, one each semester: Bain’s *What the Best College Teachers Do* and Cross and Steadman’s *Implementing the Scholarship of Teaching*. Our numbers increased to about a dozen faculty members. Currently, the group is in its third year, and as many as 15 people turn up for lunch and discussion. Our book selection this year is L. Dee Fink’s *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*.

What makes a teaching circle work, and could it work at other institutions? Modest administrative support is helpful. In addition to paying for cafeteria lunches, our provost purchased books for participants, beginning in the second year. It is also important to have someone interested in leading the group, setting dates, and sending e-mail reminders. Our leadership has changed each year. We have decided together, at the end of one year, which book to read for the next. No other structure is necessary. No one ever takes attendance. There is a very populist, grassroots feel to what we do.

The benefits of ongoing conversation about the art of teaching will be obvious to anyone reading this newsletter. However, here are a few you may not think of: we have come to know one another better; we have become teaching resources for each other; and we have embraced new ideas in our reading that we might have dismissed without the support of the group. Most important of all, those of us who are at midcareer are finding new energy for our profession. What began as a support group for one individual has supported us all.

Source: Faculty Focus <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/faculty-development/teaching-circles-low-cost-high-impact-faculty-development/>

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<sup>1</sup> Note that Mini-grant money could provide funding to pay for books read by teaching circle groups, but cannot be used for food for teaching circle meetings. For examples of teaching circles and how they used funding, see the list of teaching circle mini-grant winners at: <https://www.iup.edu/teachingexcellence/awards-and-grants/teaching-circle-mini-grants/2017%E2%80%9318-teaching-circle-mini-grant-award-winners/>